



# OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

**Opening Statement of Chairwoman Frederica Wilson (FL-24)**

Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investments

*Investing in Economic Mobility: The Important Role of Hispanic Serving Institutions and Other Minority Serving Institutions.*

Zoom

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 | 10:15 a.m.

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Today, I look forward to discussing how Hispanic-Serving Institutions and other Minority-Serving Institutions deliver on our promise to provide higher education for all. This discussion is the second in a series of hearings dedicated to examining the role of universities that are dedicated to serving historically underserved students.

Before I go further, I want to address the recent violent and deplorable threats that have terrorized HBCU students, faculty, and staff. Yesterday, we received a briefing from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, that was open to everyone, on their investigation into these hate crimes. I remain committed to ensuring that the federal government holds the perpetrators accountable for their actions and that HBCUs – and all institutions – receive the support to remain open and safe.

I also look forward to continue hearing from DOJ regarding their efforts to keep HBCU campus communities safe. I want to remain in close contact with Member of Congress and college and university leadership regarding the state of bomb threats.

I remain disgusted and petrified that we did not have a classified briefing. Disgusted, because as a Member of Congress, I am due that, I earned that. I am petrified, because 30 years ago, I founded a mentoring program, the 5000 Role Models of Excellence, for boys of color. I have thousands of young men at HBCUs all over the country. HBCUs that are receiving death threats and if something happens to one of them in an HBCU, I will blame myself because I sent them there. I have nightmares, and I don't want to call it racism or discrimination, but what do you say? Black lives do matter, especially for me and my 5000 Role Model boys. I am crazy with anxiety and so are my thousands of parents. God help us all.

Today, we are focused on Minority Serving Institutions—including Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominately Black Institutions, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions. These institutions play a key role in opening the door to higher education, particularly for students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students.

These institutions provide a low-cost and high-quality postsecondary education close to home. Importantly, MSIs embrace students' cultural backgrounds and diverse experiences. Honoring ancestors and sustaining traditions all serve to signal to students that they belong in college.

I am extremely proud to have five Hispanic-Serving Institutions operating in my district: Broward College, Miami Dade College, Barry College, St. Thomas University, and Florida International University. These institutions, and other MSIs across the nation, provide a unique setting that prepare students for success and serve as engines of social mobility.

We can see this in the significant contribution MSIs make to our workforce and our economy. For example, MSIs enroll a high proportion of historically underrepresented students in STEM fields, and they support these students' academic and economic development.

Moreover, 2018 research from the American Council on Education demonstrates that the economic mobility rate at Predominately Black Institutions and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions was double compared to other institutions. And HSIs were even more likely to move students up the income ladder. Simply put, MSIs enroll more low-income students and catapult more of those students to the middle class and beyond compared to other institutions.

Unfortunately, MSIs are often under-resourced forcing them to do more with less.

To be designated as a Minority-Serving Institution, colleges must not only enroll a substantial number of students of color—they must also enroll a substantial number of Pell students and have fewer resources than their peer institutions. As a result, many MSIs lack access to alternate funding sources that other institutions rely on, limiting the resources students need to complete their education.

A 2014 report found that, in Fiscal Year 2010, MSIs operated on an average of approximately \$16,600 in per-student revenue, compared to nearly \$30,000 at other institutions.

We know that when institutions have more resources, they can provide high-quality educational opportunities to more students.

Investing in MSIs is even more critical as our higher education system recovers from the pandemic.

Over the past two years, Congress passed the *CARES Act* and the *American Rescue Plan*, which delivered more than \$26 billion in dedicated federal COVID relief aid for MSIs.

These funds helped prevent students from experiencing homelessness, hunger, and other hardships, and provided institutions in my district with the resources to protect the health and safety of campus communities.

While these bills provided desperately needed aid to students and institutions, we have a responsibility to continue enhancing support for institutions that play an outsized role in fulfilling the promise of higher education.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to deliver the sustained investments that Minority-Serving Institutions need to provide a high-quality, affordable education for generations to come.

Additionally, in the future, we will host a hearing that showcases the contributions and accomplishments of Tribal Colleges and Universities, which also play an important role in the higher education landscape.

I want to thank our distinguished witnesses, again, for being with us today. I now yield to the new Ranking Member, and we welcome her to that position, Mrs. Miller-Meeks, for her opening statement. I look forward to working with her to support our institutions of higher education and help every American access a rewarding career.