Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 11, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas,

Every student deserves the right to receive their education without the fear of violence. This past week; however, two of our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) have been victims of gun violence. During homecoming season, where students, alumni, faculty and staff are supposed to be celebrating their university, they were instead faced with senseless violence. Stay at home orders, SWAT team searches and injury was their reality. As a result of the gun violence on Morgan State University's campus, which led to five students and another young adult being injured, all homecoming activities for the rest of the week were canceled. Additionally, all classes and other campus activities were canceled that week, effectively interrupting educational instruction. Days later, two young adults were injured by gunfire at Bowie State University during homecoming festivities. With these instances happening consecutively, any students may become, or have become, desensitized to these violence directed toward themselves and campus communities.

A few months ago, Edward Waters University evaded a mass shooting on the campus when Lieutenant Antonio Bailey chased a potential assailant off the campus grounds. That man would later shoot and kill three black people only a few blocks from campus. Edward Waters is just another example of why it is important to invest resources into the safety of our campuses.

As Co-Chair of the Bipartisan HBCU Caucus, I am concerned about the safety and security of our HBCU campuses. With Morgan State University and Bowie State University in such close proximity to each other and violence happening within a few days of each other, it is important to look at the overall safety of HBCU campuses. To that end, there needs to be a concerted effort to provide funding to HBCUs for them to protect their student body and faculty from violence. Many of these HBCUs have open campuses and are soft targets for outside attacks. Any individual or group with the intention of harming these campuses can do so with relative ease. Therefore, the safety and security of these campuses needs to be a top priority. We need to prevent gun violence from happening. Your office has supported our efforts in the past to ensure that our campuses are safe. Last year, at least 57 bomb threats were directed at HBCUs across the country and gun violence.

We would also appreciate the chance for our offices to connect with your teams at regular, scheduled intervals to share updates, feedback, and concerns from the broader community, as appropriate. We would also welcome in those conversations any notes on funding, authorities, or other assistance from Congress that might be helpful as you continue your investigations and we all work to support the HBCU community. We need to protect HBCUs because they have been vital to the African-American community

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I appreciate your work and remain eager to be supportive in any way possible. Let's end the violence towards our HBCUs.

CC: The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue,
SW Washington, DC 20202

Sincerely,

_____

Representative Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Co-Chair of HBCU Caucus