

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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**MEMORANDUM**

**March 14, 2022**

**To: Members of the Committee on Oversight and Reform**

**Fr: Committee Staff**

**Re: Committee on Oversight and Reform Hybrid Hearing on “HBCUs at Risk:  
Examining Federal Support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities”**

On **Thursday, March 17, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. ET in Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building and on the Zoom video platform**, the Committee on Oversight and Reform will hold a hybrid hearing to examine ways the federal government can support Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the face of threats to student safety and explore reforms to improve security on HBCU campuses and enhance efforts to prevent domestic terrorism.

**I. BACKGROUND**

Since January 2022, at least 36 HBCUs—more than one third of the nation’s 101 historically Black academic institutions—have been targeted with violent bomb threats. At least 18 of these institutions were targeted on February 1, 2022, alone—the first day of Black History Month.<sup>1</sup>

On February 2, 2022, Rep. Byron Donalds wrote to Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney, requesting a hearing on the ongoing bomb threats, stating:

Any attempt to threaten, intimidate, or inflict harm on innocent college students prohibits not only Black students and staff, but all people, from securing their fundamental right to safety, adequate education, and their overall wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dozens of Bomb Threats Have HBCUs Looking to Biden for Support, FBI for Answers*, McClatchy (Mar. 8, 2022) (online at [www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/white-house/article259152728.html](http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/white-house/article259152728.html)); *Repeated Bomb Threats Rattle U.S. Black Colleges and Universities*, Reuters (Feb. 1, 2022) (online at [www.reuters.com/world/us/more-us-black-colleges-universities-receive-bomb-threats-2022-02-01/](http://www.reuters.com/world/us/more-us-black-colleges-universities-receive-bomb-threats-2022-02-01/)).

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Rep. Byron Donalds to Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform (Feb. 2, 2022) (online at [https://donalds.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hbcu\\_bomb\\_threat\\_letter\\_final.pdf](https://donalds.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hbcu_bomb_threat_letter_final.pdf)).

On February 8, 2022, Chairwoman Maloney and Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Chairman Jamie Raskin agreed to hold a bipartisan hearing to “examine steps the federal government can take to address the threats against HBCUs and other displays of violent white supremacy.”<sup>3</sup>

On February 23, 2022, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) announced that the bomb threats against HBCUs were being investigated as “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism and hate crimes” and reiterated that the investigation was of the “highest priority.”<sup>4</sup> This announcement occurred just weeks after a bomb threat was called in to Bethune-Cookman University, an HBCU in Florida, by an individual claiming to be affiliated with the Atomwaffen Division—a notorious neo-Nazi organization that was previously linked to five killings across three states.<sup>5</sup> In another threat against Spelman College, an HBCU for women based in Atlanta, Georgia, the caller claimed to have targeted the institution because “there are too many Black students in it.”<sup>6</sup>

These threats have come at a time when hate crimes and other acts of violent right-wing extremism are on the rise across the country. According to a 2020 FBI Uniform Crime Reporting report, hate crimes against Black Americans increased by nearly 50% between 2019 and 2020, from 1,930 to 2,871 incidents.<sup>7</sup>

A 2021 joint report from FBI and the Department of Homeland Security found that racially motivated violent extremists (RMVE) are “the most lethal DVE [domestic violence extremist] threat to the Homeland.”<sup>8</sup> RMVE actors, and specifically white supremacists, were

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, and Chairman Jamie Raskin, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Committee on Oversight and Reform, to Rep. Byron Donalds (Feb. 8, 2022) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2022-02-08.CBM%20JR%20to%20Donalds%20re%20HBCU%20Bomb%20Threats.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Press Release: FBI Statement on the Ongoing Investigation Into Bomb Threats to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Houses of Worship* (Feb. 23, 2022) (online at [www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-update-on-the-continuing-investigation-into-bomb-threats-to-historically-black-colleges-and-universities-and-houses-of-worship](http://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-update-on-the-continuing-investigation-into-bomb-threats-to-historically-black-colleges-and-universities-and-houses-of-worship)).

<sup>5</sup> *Bethune-Cookman Bomb Threat Caller Described Elaborate Plot, Police Say*, News 4 Jax (Feb. 3, 2022) (online at [www.news4jax.com/news/florida/2022/02/03/bethune-cookman-bomb-threat-caller-described-elaborate-plot-police-say/](http://www.news4jax.com/news/florida/2022/02/03/bethune-cookman-bomb-threat-caller-described-elaborate-plot-police-say/)); *Deadly Connection: Neo-Nazi Group Linked to 3 Accused Killers*, National Public Radio (Mar. 16, 2018) (online at [www.npr.org/2018/03/06/590292705/5-killings-3-states-and-1-common-neo-nazi-link](http://www.npr.org/2018/03/06/590292705/5-killings-3-states-and-1-common-neo-nazi-link)).

<sup>6</sup> *911 Call Reporting Bomb Threat at Spelman College Released*, Fox 5 (Feb. 11, 2022) (online at [www.fox5atlanta.com/news/911-call-reporting-bomb-threat-at-selman-college-released](http://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/911-call-reporting-bomb-threat-at-selman-college-released)).

<sup>7</sup> Department of Justice, *2020 Hate Crimes Statistics* (online at [www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics](http://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics)) (accessed Mar. 8, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security, *Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Data on Domestic Terrorism* (May 2021) (online at [www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news\\_documents/ndaa-domestic-terrorism-strategic-report-051421.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news_documents/ndaa-domestic-terrorism-strategic-report-051421.pdf)).

responsible for 24 of the 32 people killed by DVEs in 2019—the deadliest year involving such attacks since 1995.<sup>9</sup>

The recent bomb threats have negatively impacted the welfare of college students attending HBCUs across the country, stripping away their sense of security, causing them to fear for their safety, and placing significant strain on their mental health.<sup>10</sup>

## II. LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

The hearing will explore legislative reforms to improve security on HBCU campuses and enhance efforts to prevent domestic terrorism. These reforms include H.R. 3294, the Institutional Grants for New Infrastructure, Technology, and Education for HBCU Excellence Act, or the IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act, which would increase investments in infrastructure at HBCUs and provide funds that could be used to strengthen the safety and security of campuses; H.R. 350, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, which would enhance the government’s ability to counter domestic terrorism; and H.R. 6873, the Bombing Prevention Act, which would enhance the government’s ability to detect, protect against, and respond to domestic bomb threats.

## III. WITNESSES

### Panel I

**Ms. Kylie Burke**  
President, Student Association  
Howard University

**Mr. Emmanuel Ukot**  
President, Student Government Association  
Xavier University of Louisiana

**Mr. Devan M. Vilfrard**  
Associate Chief Justice, Student Supreme Court  
Florida A&M University

### Panel II

**Dr. Michelle Asha Cooper**  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education  
Department of Education

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<sup>9</sup> *FBI and DHS Report Finds Deaths at Hands of Racially Motivated Violent Extremists on the Rise in US*, CNN (May 15, 2021) (online at [www.cnn.com/2021/05/15/politics/fbi-dhs-report-deaths-rise-domestic-violent-extremism/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2021/05/15/politics/fbi-dhs-report-deaths-rise-domestic-violent-extremism/index.html)).

<sup>10</sup> *The FBI Has Identified Suspects Accused of Making Threats to HBCUs This Week, Officials Says*, CNN (Feb. 3, 2022) (online at [www.cnn.com/2022/02/03/us/hbcu-bomb-threats-fbi-investigation/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2022/02/03/us/hbcu-bomb-threats-fbi-investigation/index.html)).

**Mr. Sean Haglund**

Associate Director, Office for Bombing Prevention  
Department of Homeland Security

**Mr. Ryan T. Young**

Executive Assistant Director, Intelligence Branch  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

***Additional witnesses to be announced***

Staff contacts: Jordan Blumenthal, Devon Ombres, Chioma Chukwu, Daina Robinson, Courtney Koelbel, Warner Dixon, and Simone Herndon at (202) 225-5051.