



Testimony of President Larry Robinson, Ph.D.

United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform

March 17, 2022

Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Subcommittee Chairman Jamie Raskin, and Ranking Member James Comer, thank you for the opportunity to submit public testimony for the “HBCUs at Risk: Examining Federal Support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities” hearing.

Florida A&M University, based in the State capitol of Tallahassee, Florida, was founded in 1887 with only 15 students and two instructors. Today, FAMU has grown to nearly 10,000 students and we are the highest ranked among public Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) according to the U.S. News and World Report National Public Universities. Our University offers 56 bachelor’s degrees, 29 master’s degrees, 12 doctoral degrees and three professional degrees. We are a leading land-grant research institution with an increased focus on science, technology, research, engineering, agriculture, and mathematics.

We are grateful for the tremendous support of the federal government as a key partner and resource for FAMU and HBCUs across the country. I remember all too well the fear that gripped our students, faculty and staff in 1999 after bombings actually occurred on FAMU’s campus. We were fortunate there were no injuries during the two blasts that occurred and only minor damage to facilities; however, the psychological impact threatened our traditional activities in the days and months that followed.

Now 23 years later, in January 2022 during the first wave of the HBCU bomb threats, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) contacted our university to ensure we had the latest open-source intelligence regarding the active bomb threats to our fellow HBCUs. Although FAMU has not received a direct threat, we feel the anxiety and frustration from these senseless acts as do our partner institutions.

In February 2022, as the bomb threats continued, the FBI invited our team to conference calls to ensure we had the latest intelligence. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) invited FAMU to a federal multi-agency virtual meeting on campus safety and resilience. During this meeting, our federal partners shared information on their capabilities, resources, trainings, and funding opportunities with fellow HBCUs. This information has been instrumental as we enhanced our relationship with our federal law enforcement and emergency management partners. The DHS bomb threat checklist was provided to our students, faculty, and staff and we are providing CISA bomb threat training materials to our campus.

In March, CISA toured our campus and shared resources to support our university. FAMU will be working with CISA to conduct Infrastructure Survey Tool (IST) throughout our campus. The IST is a voluntary, web-based assessment that Protective Security Advisors conduct in coordination with facilities owners and operators to identify and document the overall security and resilience of our facilities.

FAMU is supporting the planning of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hi-Ed Emergency Management Symposium scheduled in June. FAMU, Howard University, along with partners of the HBCU Emergency Management Consortium will speak at the Emergency Management Institute as we work to enhance collaboration with our fellow HBCUs as well as our federal partners.

In August, a FEMA-sponsored program provided by Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service will host a training on campus. The purpose of this course is to prepare executive and senior leadership within institutions of higher education and the community for their roles to support the management of a critical incident. As described in the National Incident Management System, we will endeavor to utilize the effective and efficient application and implementation of a whole community approach.

Our university will continuously work to enhance our abilities to prepare for these threats and work to promote resiliency throughout the campus. However, we must remember this is a whole community approach when preparing for any disaster. Federal and local agencies must continue to work together with HBCUs to share information, lessons learned, and work to improve our abilities to prepare for and respond to these threats – we can only grow stronger, together.