



Written Testimony of Janai Nelson

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Before the United States House of Representatives

Committee on Homeland Security

**Hearing on “The Targeting of Black Institutions: From Church Violence to
University Bomb Threats”**

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Good morning Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Katko, and members of the Committee. My name is Janai Nelson, and I am the President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc (“LDF”). Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the targeting of Black institutions.

LDF is the country’s first and foremost civil rights law organization.¹ Founded in 1940 under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall—a graduate of a Historically Black College and University (“HBCU”)—LDF was launched at a time when the nation’s aspirations for equality and due process of law were stifled by widespread state-sponsored racial inequality. From that era to the present, LDF’s mission has been transformative—to achieve racial justice, equality, and an inclusive society, using the power of law, narrative, research, and people to defend and advance the full dignity and citizenship of Black people in America

LDF’s litigation, policy advocacy, organizing, and public education programs seek to ensure the fundamental rights of all people to quality education, economic opportunity, the right to vote and fully participate in democracy, and the right to a fair and just judicial system. As the organization that litigated *Brown v. Board of Education*,² the landmark Supreme Court case that struck down segregation in public schools, LDF has long led the struggle for equal education in the United States. That struggle continues today, in our commitment to building K-12 and higher education learning institutions that foster diversity and advance racial justice.

Overview and Severity of the Attacks on HBCUs

On January 4, 2022, at least eight HBCUs received bomb threats: Howard University, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Prairie View A&M University, North Carolina Central

¹ LDF has been an entirely separate organization from the NAACP since 1957.

² 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

University, Florida Memorial University, Norfolk State University, Spelman College, and Xavier University of Louisiana.³ The threats generally arrived during the afternoon or evening via an anonymous caller. In response, schools were forced to order evacuations or lockdowns, and to work with local law enforcement to secure their campuses. Although no bombs were found on any campus, students reported feeling distressed after the anonymous threats were called in. One Spelman student noted the similarities between these threats and past violence on HBCU campuses, stating “Black people are still facing discrimination and acts of violence...[t]he same way our ancestors faced during the civil rights movement and prior.”⁴ Another student remarked, “I’ve never felt completely safe in this country as a Black woman and as a queer person. But this? This was a very tangible threat to not only my safety but the safety of my community, not just at Howard but across the country. HBCUs are very visible Black spaces. And that makes them very visible targets for white supremacists.”⁵

On January 31, 2022, we saw another series of bomb threats targeting at least six HBCUs: Southern University and A&M College, Howard University, Bethune-Cookman University, Albany State University, Bowie State University, and Delaware State University.⁶ After these attacks the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) stated it was “aware of the series of bomb threats around the country” and was “working with our law enforcement partners to address any potential threats.”⁷

³ Andrew Jeong and Susan Svrluga, *Howard University and at least 7 other HBCUs receive bomb threats, triggering evacuations and lockdowns*, Washington Post (Jan. 5, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/01/05/hbcu-bomb-threats-howard-university/>.

⁴ Petula Dvorak, *Bomb threats damage us, even when nothing explodes*, Washington Post (Feb. 10, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/02/10/hbcu-bomb-threats-racial-violence/>.

⁵ Esther Schrader, *HBCU students and leaders ‘lean into history’ amid bomb threats*, Southern Poverty Law Center (Feb. 9, 2022), <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2022/02/09/hbcu-presidents-students-react-bomb-threats>

⁶ Paulina Firozi, *At least six historically Black colleges and universities receive bomb threats*, Washington Post (Jan. 31, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/01/31/university-bomb-threats-hbcu/>.

⁷ Id.

The next day, on February 1, 2022, the first day of Black History Month, another round of bomb threats were received at sixteen HBCUs: Rust College, Tougaloo College, Jackson State University, Alcorn State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Fort Valley State University, Spelman College Morgan State University, Coppin State University, Harris-Stowe State University, Kentucky State University, Xavier University of Louisiana, Philander Smith College, Edward Waters University, Howard University and the University of the District of Columbia.⁸ Immediately following the February 1st attacks, the FBI released a statement that the threats were being “investigated as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism and hate crimes.”⁹ However, the attacks did not stop. During the month of February, Black History month, there was not a week without a bomb threat made to HBCUs.¹⁰

Importance of HBCUs and the Effects of Violent Threats

HBCU’s were established in the early 19th Century to provide undergraduate and graduate level educational opportunities for people of African descent. Many of the 101-accredited HBCUs were founded towards the end of the Civil War when it was still dangerous to educate freed slaves or their progeny. HBCUs were created in direct resistance to the limitations placed on education

⁸ Lauren Lumpkin and Susan Svrluga, *Fear, anxiety follow third wave of bomb threats targeting HBCUs*, Washington Post (Feb. 1, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/02/01/hbcu-bomb-threats-campus-reactions/>

⁹ *FBI Statement on Investigation into Bomb Threats to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Houses of Worship*, (Feb. 2, 2022), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-statement-on-investigation-into-bomb-threats-to-historically-black-colleges-and-universities-and-houses-of-worship>.

¹⁰ On February 8, 2022, Spelman College received a bomb threat. On February 14, 2022, both Howard University and Fisk University received bomb threats. On February 16, 2022, three institutions received bomb threats: Fayetteville State University, Claflin University, and Winston-Salem State University. On February 23, 2022, Hampton University received a bomb threat.¹⁰ On February 25, 2022, at least three institutions received a bomb threat: Norfolk State University, Elizabeth City State University, and Dillard University. Testimony of Dr. Walter M. Kimbrough President, Dillard University Chairman, Council of Presidents, United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary (March 8, 2022), <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kimbrough%20testimony1.pdf>.

for Black people.¹¹ They were created to be safe havens, primarily for people for whom education was previously illegal or out of reach but provided the opportunity to receive an education to everyone who applied—regardless of race or ethnicity.

Today, HBCUs continue that legacy. They provide students with a safe space to earn a quality education. Though HBCUs make up only three percent of the country’s colleges and universities, they enroll 10% of all African American students and produce almost 20% of all African American graduates.¹² In science, technology, engineering, and mathematics or “STEM” fields, HBCUs produce 24% of all bachelor’s degrees received by African Americans.¹³ Concentrated in 19 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, HBCUs enroll nearly 300,000 students, approximately 80% of whom are African American.¹⁴ HBCUs have historically produced some of the most accomplished and trailblazing individuals in this country.¹⁵

¹¹ *Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, National Center for Education Statistics (last visited Mar. 12, 2022), <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667>.

¹² *HBCUs Make America Strong: The Positive Economic Impact of historically Black Colleges and Universities*, United Negro College Fund: Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute (last visited Mar. 15, 2022), https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/HBCU_Consumer_Brochure_FINAL_APPROVED.pdf?_ga=2.249529666.474259404.1647352517-585719881.1646852182

¹³ K.M Saunders and B.T. Nagle, *HBCUs Punching Above Their Weight: A State-Level Analysis of Historically Black College and University Enrollment Graduation*, UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute (2018). Available at https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PATW_Report_FINAL0919.pdf?_ga=2.87072989.474259404.1647352517-585719881.1646852182

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). Digest of education statistics 2019 [Table 313.20]. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_313.20.asp.

¹⁵ Thurgood Marshall, a civil rights lawyer, the first Black Supreme Court Justice, and the founder of LDF, graduated Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. *Who Was Thurgood Marshall*, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (last visited Mar. 14, 2022), <https://www.naacpldf.org/about-us/history/thurgood-marshall/>; Scholar and civil rights activist, W. E. B. Dubois, attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee before becoming the first African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard College. *W. E. B. Du Bois*, Hutchins Center for African & African American Research, Harvard University (last visited Mar. 14, 2022), <https://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/web-dubois/>; Toni Morrison graduated from Howard University, in Washington, D.C. before going on to become the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. *Toni Morrison*, National Women’s History Museum (last visited Mar. 14, 2022), <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/toni-morrison>; George Edward Alcorn, pioneering physicist and engineer noted for his aerospace and semiconductor inventions, graduated from Howard University. *George Edward Alcorn X-Ray Spectrometer*, National Inventors Hall of Fame (last visited Mar. 14, 2022), <https://www.invent.org/inductees/george-edward-alcorn>; Former Chair of Microsoft Corporation and lead independent director of the Microsoft Board of Directors, John W. Thompson, is a graduate of Florida A&M

The visibility of HBCUs has increased in recent years, particularly following the election of Howard University alumna Kamala Harris as the first Black woman Vice President of the United States. As HBCUs have become more visible, they have also become more apparent targets for those who would sow hate. HBCUs are targeted specifically because they represent the independence, resilience, and unbounded intellectual capacity of Black Americans, which is a threat to white supremacist ideology.

These bomb threats disrupt college routines for students, interrupt teaching for faculty, and disrupt the work of administrative staff of HBCUs. The threats have prompted colleges and universities to temporarily cancel in-person classes, lock down buildings and ask people to shelter in place in order to ensure the safety of everyone on campus. Most notably, these attacks terrorize students, professors, and staff. The constant threat of violence reminds everyone on these campuses that they are not safe at school. Indeed, the FBI's investigation of these threats of violence indicate they are intended to intimidate students and to stoke fear among campuses specifically because HBCUs are known to predominately serve Black students.¹⁶ Recently, the FBI reported that the people calling in these bomb threats claim to be affiliated with Neo-Nazi group the Atomwaffen Division ("AWD").¹⁷ The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated

University. Executive Officers, Microsoft (last visited Mar. 14, 2022), <https://news.microsoft.com/exec/john-w-thompson/>. Media mogul, journalist, celebrity, philanthropist, and entrepreneur, Oprah Winfrey graduated from Tennessee State University. *Oprah Winfrey*, Britannica (last visited Mar. 14, 2022), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oprah-Winfrey>; See generally, DeNeen L. Brown, *How crucial are historically black colleges? Just look at who's graduated from them*, Washington Post (May 10, 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/05/08/from-mlk-to-oprah-winfrey-historically-black-colleges-educate-african-american-pioneers/>.

¹⁶ *FBI Statement on Investigation into Bomb Threats to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Houses of Worship*, (Feb. 2, 2022), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-statement-on-investigation-into-bomb-threats-to-historically-black-colleges-and-universities-and-houses-of-worship>; Michael Levenson, Katie Benner and Giulia Heyward, *Six Juveniles Are Persons of Interest in Threats to Historically Black Colleges*, New York Times (Feb. 2, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/02/us/hbcu-bomb-threats.html>.

¹⁷ Jeff Martin and Michael Balsamo, *HBCU bomb threat caller described elaborate plot: police*, Associated Press (Feb. 2, 2022), <https://apnews.com/article/education-florida-race-and-ethnicity-bomb-threats-daytona-beach-1643a14133f9a395502ea336892ec8f3>.

AWD as a hate group.¹⁸ AWD believes that its mission—a fascist political order—can only be achieved through acts of violence aimed at the state, Jewish people, Black people and people of color, liberals and those who stand in solidarity with such communities. Indeed, members of AWD call themselves “accelerationists” because they embrace violence as an essential part of their political revolution.¹⁹

Additionally, these threats create significant, unexpected financial costs for institutions that have been systematically underfunded by state legislatures and the federal government for decades.²⁰ Many HBCUs are land-grant institutions, or schools founded by state legislatures to foster agricultural research and instruction and receive much of their funding through state legislatures. Compared to their white counterparts, Black land-grant universities have been underfunded by at least \$12.8 billion over the last three decades.²¹ Funding for land-grant institutions is distributed at the discretion of the state legislature and in many cases, state legislatures choose to overfund white land-grant institutions while barely meeting the required funding for Black land-grant institutions. For example, in 2020, the Tennessee General Assembly provided \$69.4 million in land-grant dollars, or \$2,460 per student, to the University of Tennessee. That is more than four times its required match of funding.²² Notably, 77% of the University of Tennessee’s student population is white. By contrast, the Tennessee General Assembly provided Tennessee State University, an HBCU, \$8.7 million or \$1,318 per student—12% above its required

¹⁸ *Atomwaffen Division*, Southern Poverty Law Center (last visited Mar. 12, 2022), <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/atomwaffen-division>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Susan Adams and Hank Tucker, *For HBCUs Cheated Out Of Billions, Bomb Threats Are The Latest Indignity*, *Forbes* (February/March 2022), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2022/02/01/for-hbcus-cheated-out-of-billions-bomb-threats-are-latest-indignity/?sh=7cf01fd3640c>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

match. Moreover, reports suggest that the Tennessee General Assembly only started meeting its matching requirement for Tennessee State University in 2017.

At least in part because of funding disparities, HBCUS are more tuition dependent than other colleges and universities. Without redress, these bomb threats could serve to reduce enrollment at HBCUs and therefore have a long-term impact on revenue and viability. The bomb threats also impose immediate costs for security measures and other actions that HBCUs may be forced to undertake in order to maintain the safety of their campuses and the mental health and physical safety of their students. In a letter to all students, Howard University Chief of Police Marcus Lyles noted that, although the bomb threats against the university had not been credible, they were “a drain on institutional and municipal resources.”²³ To increase security personnel, augment surveillance equipment, install physical barriers, or integrate safety procedures more closely with local police departments could prove to be a significant financial burden for HBCUs.

Historical Significance of Bomb Threats to Black Institutions

There is a long and horrific history of bomb threats made and realized upon Black institutions in the United States. Infamously, in 1963 members of the Ku Klux Klan (“KKK”) planted bombs in the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, terrorizing the more than 400 congregants, injuring more than 20 people, and killing four young girls.²⁴ African American churches such as the 16th Street Baptist Church were fundamental in the organization of protest activity throughout the Civil Rights Movement. As hubs of power, imagination, and

²³ *A Message from Chief Lyles on Bomb Threat Safety*, Howard University (Jan. 31, 2022), <https://howard.edu/node/841>.

²⁴ *Four Black Girls Killed in Church Bombing in Birmingham, Alabama*, Equal Justice Initiative (last visited March 11, 2022), <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/sep/15>.

community, Black churches were often targeted with violence and terror.²⁵ Indeed, in an effort to intimidate demonstrators, members of the KKK would routinely telephone churches with bomb threats intended to disrupt meetings of organizers and protestors as well as regular church services.²⁶ The attack on the 16th Street Baptist Church exemplifies the tragic outcomes when threats become reality.

Black churches remained a target of white supremacist hate and violence through the 1990s and to the present. From 1994 to 1996 Black churches across the southeast were fire-bombed, prompting Congressional hearings to address the violence.²⁷ In 2015, a white supremacist walked into Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina—often referred to as Mother Emanuel—and opened fire. The perpetrator murdered nine people who welcomed him into their sacred space to discuss scripture, specifically because they were Black.²⁸ Mother Emanuel had long been a target of racialized violence. In 1822, it was burned as a result of its association with Denmark Vesey, a formerly enslaved Black man who tried to organize a slave revolt.²⁹

²⁵ Sarah Kaplan and Justin Wm. Moyer, *Why racists target black churches*, Washington Post (Jul. 1, 2015), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/07/01/why-racists-burn-black-churches/>; Matthew Cressler, *Why White Terrorists Attack Black Churches*, Slate (June 19, 2015), <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/06/charleston-ame-church-shooting-dylann-roof-is-the-latest-in-a-long-line-of-white-terrorists-terrified-by-the-political-power-of-black-churches.html>; Michael Eric Dyson, *Love and Terror in the Black Church*, New York Times (June 20, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/michael-eric-dyson-love-and-terror-in-the-black-church.html>.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Conor Friedersdorf, *Thugs and Terrorists Have Attacked Black Churches for Generations*, the Atlantic (June 18, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/thugs-and-terrorists-have-plagued-black-churches-for-generations/396212/>.

²⁸ Yamiche Alcindor and Doug Stanglin, *Affidavits spell out chilling case against Dylann Roof*, USA Today (June 19, 2015), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/06/19/dylann-roof-charleston-police-charged--murder-black-church/28975573/>.

²⁹ Kat Chow, *Denmark Vesey And The History Of Charleston's 'Mother Emanuel' Church*, National Public Radio (June 18, 2015), <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/06/18/415465656/denmark-vesey-and-the-history-of-charleston-s-mother-emanuel-church>.

This nation also has a shameful history of using the powers of the state and private acts of violence to prevent Black people from receiving an education. Before and during the Civil War, states instituted laws forbidding enslaved people from learning to read or write.³⁰ Between 1740 and 1834, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Virginia all passed anti-literacy laws.³¹ Many of these laws made teaching enslaved people to read or write punishable by fines, imprisonment, and physical punishments.

Efforts to prevent Black people from earning an education continued even after the end of the Civil War. In 1865, an arsonist set fire to Wilberforce University, in Ohio, the first college owned and operated by Black people.³² In 1866, LeMoyne-Owen College, a private HBCU in Tennessee, was destroyed in a fire during a race massacre that summoned federal troops to the area.³³ In 1876, a suspicious fire destroyed an administrative building at Claflin University, a private HBCU in South Carolina and in 1905 a fire destroyed Roger Williams University, an HBCU in Nashville, Tennessee.³⁴

Educational institutions, houses of worship, and other community institutions have historically been regarded as safe spaces for all people—sanctuaries for communities to gather, share, learn, fellowship, and build relationships. This is particularly true for communities of color.

³⁰ *see* South Carolina Act of 1740; Virginia Revised Code of 1819.

³¹ Peri Stone-Palmquist, Still Not Free: *Connecting The Dots Of Education Injustice*, Dignity in Schools (Feb. 13, 2020), <https://dignityinschools.org/still-not-free-connecting-the-dots-of-education-injustice/#:~:text=Between%201740%20and%201834%2C%20Alabama,fines%2C%20imprisonment%20and%20physical%20punishments>.

³² Charlie Tyson, *For Storied Institution, a Historic Low*, Inside Higher Ed (June 30, 2020), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/06/30/wilberforce-university-countrys-oldest-private-historically-black-institution-could#:~:text=In%201865%2C%20on%20the%20night,the%20latter%20seems%20more%20likely>.

³³ LeMoyne-Owen College, *Our History*, (last visited Mar. 3, 2022), <https://www.loc.edu/about-us/our-history/>

³⁴ Testimony of Dr. Walter M. Kimbrough President, Dillard University Chairman, Council of Presidents, United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary (March 8, 2022), <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kimbrough%20testimony1.pdf>.

The bomb threats against more than one third of all HBCUs have shaken this sense of safety and security.

Though white supremacist activity and violence is not new, there has been a disturbing increase in recruitment, propaganda, and visibility of such groups in recent years. According to data from the Anti-Defamation League, white supremacist propaganda distribution on college campuses steadily increased from 2016 to 2019.³⁵ On college and university campuses, propaganda messages have both subtly and explicitly attacked minority groups, including Jews, blacks, Muslims, non-white immigrants and the LGBTQ community.³⁶ In addition to increased recruitment on college campuses, the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University identified online video-games and streaming platforms as another space that is ripe with white supremacist recruitment efforts.³⁷ Internet-based platforms, websites, and social spaces have also been levied by such groups to increase fundraising, communicate and organize members between different countries, and to amplify messages of hate. Notably, the FBI reported more than 8,000 hate crimes in 2020, the highest total in more than a decade.³⁸

The bombs threats made to HBCUs must be considered as part of the evidenced increase in activity of white supremacist violence across the country. Congress cannot avoid confronting this particular scourge of violence as a form of domestic terrorism and addressing it as a matter of

³⁵ *White Supremacists Continue to Spread Hate on American Campuses*, Anti-Defamation League (June 27, 2019), <https://www.adl.org/blog/white-supremacists-continue-to-spread-hate-on-american-campuses>.

³⁶ Mallory Simon and Sara Sidner, *White supremacists increase recruiting efforts at colleges*, *ADL says*, CNN (June 28, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/27/us/white-supremacist-recruiting-efforts-at-colleges-soh/index.html>.

³⁷ *A National Policy Blueprint To End White Supremacist Violence*, Center for American Progress (Apr. 21, 2021), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/national-policy-blueprint-end-white-supremacist-violence/>; David Gambacorta, *Hate crimes are soaring. White supremacists have a new recruitment tool: Video games*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Jan. 3, 2022), <https://www.inquirer.com/news/pennsylvania-researchers-combat-white-supremacists-extremism-philadelphia-20220103.html>.

³⁸ *FBI Releases Updated 2020 Hate Crime Statistics*, Federal Bureau of Investigations (Oct. 25, 2021), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-updated-2020-hate-crime-statistics>.

national security. Indeed, just last year, the FBI testified before this Committee that “the top threat we face from domestic violent extremists stems from those we identify as racially/ethnically motivated violent extremists.”³⁹ As instances of white supremacist violence continue to increase throughout the country, and as white supremacist groups continue to increase recruitment efforts online and on college campuses, Congress must take seriously the threat of violence in Black and minority communities especially as it relates to national security.

The Urgent Need for Congressional Action

Recently, both chambers of Congress passed Resolutions condemning the string of bomb threats made to HBCUs.⁴⁰ However, more must be done to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and administrators at HBCUs. The egregious nature of these crimes, their scope and scale, and the racist motivations behind them deserve specific and immediate attention. The bomb threats, like increased violence and defacement against synagogues,⁴¹ demonstrate an increased and brazen willingness to attack institutions of minority communities. Such communities have faced discrimination and attack for years and deserve the support and protection of the federal government.

Congress must act to ensure everyone can pursue the education of their choice, free from threat, terror, or hate. In addition to ensuring that the FBI completes a thorough investigation of

³⁹ Christopher Wray, *Worldwide Threats to the Homeland*, Statement Before the House Homeland Security Committee, Federal Bureau of Investigations (Sep. 17, 2020), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/worldwide-threats-to-the-homeland-091720>.

⁴⁰ H.Con.Res. 70: Condemning threats of violence against historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and reaffirming support for HBCUs and their students, 117th Congress (2021-2022). Available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/70>; S.Res.534 - A resolution condemning threats of violence against historically Black colleges and universities and reaffirming support for the students of historically Black colleges and universities, 117th Congress (2021-2022). Available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-resolution/534>.

⁴¹ *Six Facts About Threats to The Jewish Community*, Anti-Defamation League (Jan. 16, 2022), <https://www.adl.org/blog/six-facts-about-threats-to-the-jewish-community>.

these attacks, this Committee must conduct a parallel investigation to ascertain the specific underlying animus, determine how to prevent future occurrences, and issue findings and solutions to prevent this ongoing threat.

Congress must also ensure HBCUs have the funding necessary to protect themselves from these attacks. HBCUs should be encouraged—and given the financial support—to preemptively work with local law enforcement to assess campus readiness and communicate to students and faculty the appropriate steps to take if the university comes under threat. Ensuring that HBCUs and other Black institutions have the necessary resources for safety, including the implementation of preventative protocols or systems, must be a priority of this Committee and Congress. The American Rescue Plan provided a record breaking \$2.7 billion in HBCUs to be used as direct financial relief to students and to assist in the maintenance of quality education throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴² This investment should expand to include emerging safety concerns at HBCUs which, if left unaddressed, could undermine the commitment Congress and this Administration has made to the vitality of these institutions. Additionally, Congress should look to the White House’s Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans (“Initiative”) for policy recommendations from those most impacted by these threats of violence. The Initiative provides youth and other impacted people with the opportunity to share effective programs, best practices and policy recommendations designed to ensure all students feel and are safe and supported throughout their education.

⁴² FACT SHEET: State-by-State Analysis of Record \$2.7 Billion American Rescue Plan Investment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, White House Statements and Releases (March 7, 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/07/fact-sheet-state-by-state-analysis-of-record-2-7-billion-american-rescue-plan-investment-in-historically-black-colleges-and-universities/>.

Finally, Congress should pass H.R. 6825 the Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act which would expand and strengthen the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (“NSGP”). Although the NSGP was appropriated at \$180 million during Fiscal Year 2021—doubling funding from the previous year—the rate of applications to NSGP and the recent threats made to HBCUs warrants additional expansion of the grant program.⁴³ The Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act would address this increased need by increasing funding to \$500,000,000 for each fiscal year 2023 through 2028.⁴⁴ It would also establish an office within the Federal Emergency Management Agency to exclusively handle grant requests, process applications, and provide outreach, engagement, and public education support. Funding for public awareness campaigns and community outreach is critical in this moment as white supremacists target HBCUs, Black churches, synagogues, mosques and other institutions with increased frequency and random selection. The bill been endorsed by the Jewish Federations of North America, the Anti-Defamation League, the Sikh Coalition, the Secure Community Network, and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. and has broad bipartisan support.⁴⁵ It’s passage is critical in ensuring that HBCUs and other institutions have the funding necessary to continue to operate and ensure the security of their members.

Conclusion

⁴³ In FY 2021, there were a total of 3,361 NSGP applicants requesting approximately \$400 million reflecting more than a \$200 million delta between requests and funding. *Fiscal Year 2021 Nonprofit Security Grant Program Fact Sheet*, DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY, https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_fy2021-nsgp-nofo_3-2-2021.pdf (accessed Jan. 25, 2022).

⁴⁴ H.R. 6825 Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act of 2022, 117th Cong. Available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6825/all-info>.

⁴⁵ Thompson, Katko Introduce Legislation to Expand Grant Program to Protect Nonprofits and Houses of Worship, Committee on Homeland Security (Feb. 28, 2022), <https://homeland.house.gov/news/legislation/thompson-katko-introduce-legislation-to-expand-grant-program-to-protect-nonprofits-and-houses-of-worship>.

HBCUs continue to provide high quality education to their students, and safe work environments to their faculty and staff in the face of alarming and disruptive threats of violence. The perpetrators of the most recent racist threats to HBCUs has yet to be found, and the specter of violence continues to loom. Though the sense of terror on campuses has not dissipated, HBCUs have remained resilient in their mission and HBCU students, faculty, and administrators have not been silenced, nor have they been deterred from their goals. Nevertheless, the continuing threat of racialized violence and targeting of HBCs is a scenario no student, faculty or staff member, or institution should have to endure. We call on Congress provide the necessary resources to protect HBCUs, which continue to strengthen our society as a whole and to ensure the safety and security of students, faculty, and administrators on HBCU campuses.