

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 16, 2009

The Honorable Chairman Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin,

As the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee works to craft legislation related to higher education, as a member of the HELP Committee, I write to respectfully express some specific priorities that I hope you will consider including in this major piece of legislation. These priorities include making a significant investment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and supporting the creation of dynamic partnerships between community colleges and high schools for early college and dual enrollment programs. I also hope that you will include a considerable increase in the Pell Grant for our neediest students as well as improving the school readiness outcomes of all children by investing in quality early childhood education programs.

You and I both know that our future success as a nation depends on making sure that students are well-educated and successful. We have an opportunity to make an historic investment in our education system, and support President Obama's challenge of producing the most college graduates by the year 2020, by providing quality and affordable education, creating greater access, and keeping the doors to education open and accessible. I believe that the inclusion of the priorities that I have mentioned is a major step in helping us accomplish this goal.

In 1965, Congress created distinct federal support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which worked to raise the educational outcomes of African Americans. I am proud that my state of North Carolina is home to 10 HBCUs. While HBCUs make up just three percent of all colleges and universities in the nation, they account for 22 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans, 12 percent of masters degrees, 14 percent of doctoral degrees, and 28 percent of first professional degrees awarded to African Americans. Year in and year out, HBCUs dominate the top 10 list of colleges and universities in the amount of baccalaureate and graduate degrees awarded to African Americans specifically in science and engineering. It is clear to me that investing in our HBCUs is a meaningful investment in our nation's future.

As the largest part of our higher education system, community colleges play a major role in the education of North Carolinians as well as Americans across the country. North Carolina is home to 58

community colleges and I am proud of the renewed commitment towards these institutions of higher education. President Obama has called for an additional 5 million community college degrees and certificates by 2020. In North Carolina, we have made strong investments in creating relationships between public high schools and community colleges so that our students are able to attend a high school located on a community college campus and earn a high school diploma and two years of college credit or an associate degree in up to five years. I believe that we can accomplish the President's goal if we challenge states to adopt innovative programs like those in my home state. Additionally, it is also important to me that this legislation explore the creation of partnerships between community colleges and HBCUs so that we are able to provide the support necessary for students completing a two year degree at a community college to move on to a 4 year institution.

Making the commitment to provide a quality education as well as creating greater access to higher education, offers not only an effective but wise approach as we prepare to compete in the 21st century economy. I strongly believe that this bill should include funding for HBCUs, community colleges, Pell Grants and early childhood education and greatly appreciate your ongoing support and dedication to these issues. I respectfully request that you keep my points in mind and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kay R. Hagan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kay R. Hagan
United States Senator