

Adams' Bill Included in Omnibus Spending Deal



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The **historic higher education agreement** in the end-of-year spending deal:

- ✓ Includes the largest expansion of the Pell Grant program in a decade
- ✓ Simplifies FAFSA to ensure students get the financial support they need
- ✓ Forgives outstanding HBCU debt under the federal Capital Financing Loan Program
- ✓ Restores Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated individuals

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Rep. Adams' HBCU Capital Finance Debt Relief Act Included in Omnibus Spending Deal

Adams wins historic victories for equity in higher education in the FY21 Omnibus

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Alma Adams' (NC-12) bill, the HBCU Capital Finance Debt Relief Act, which cancels over \$1.3 billion in debt held by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), was included in the Omnibus spending deal. Additionally, many of Adams' priorities to build equity in higher education were included in the FY21 Omnibus.

“This year’s omnibus empowers students by expanding and simplifying the federal student aid programs, and by removing barriers for low-income and justice-involved individuals,” **said Congresswoman Adams**. “Additionally, I’m proud to announce the inclusion of my legislation, H.R. 7380, the HBCU Capital Finance Debt Relief Act, which relieves over \$1.3 billion in debt for our HBCUs, allowing these institutions to continue their mission of empowering communities of color. Combined, these measures will help ensure that higher education continues to be an accessible bridge to the middle class.”

The bill expands the Pell Grant program, which will result in hundreds of thousands of students becoming newly eligible for Pell and millions of current recipients receiving larger awards. The bill also repeals the ban on Pell eligibility among incarcerated students and restores Pell Grant eligibility for students defrauded by their institutions.

To ensure students get the financial support they need, the bill streamlines the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) and eliminates a confusing and punitive restriction that limits eligibility for subsidized federal loans among low-income students. **Finally, the legislation discharges loans made to HBCUs under the HBCU Capital Financing Loan program, providing \$1.34 billion in relief to these institutions.**

“This bipartisan agreement is a significant step toward making higher education more affordable for millions of Americans. The package released today includes a wide range of provisions – secured by House Democrats – that will make federal grants and loans more accessible and more generous, particularly for our most vulnerable students,” **said Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03)**. “Congress has a responsibility to expand access to quality higher education, which remains the surest path to the middle class. While this is not the comprehensive overhaul of the Higher Education Act and there is still work to be done, this proposal will help millions of students. I’m pleased House Democrats secured these sweeping reforms on behalf of students across the country.”

"The omnibus agreement provides increased opportunities in higher education and a path to the middle class," **said Rep. Susan A. Davis (CA-53), Chairwoman of the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee**. "This will mean a brighter future for millions of young people as our communities will also benefit from their knowledge, skills, and expertise for years to come."

H.R. 7380 was endorsed by the **United Negro College Fund (UNCF), the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF)**.

“This debt forgiveness is nothing short of transformational for HBCUs, and with this Congress can now add itself to the likes of Netflix founders Reed Hastings and Patty Quillin, McKinsey Scott, and Bruce and Martha Karsh, who have donated considerable resources to HBCUs to make life better for those who are the most deserving and know the impact of racial inequity in our country,” **said Dr. Michael L. Lomax, president and CEO of UNCF**. “I want to thank every Member of Congress who made this happen, chiefly Chairman Bobby Scott and Congresswoman Alma Adams.”

“These monumental wins in the FY 21 budget and Covid-19 emergency relief bill are a direct result of the years of advocacy from the Bipartisan HBCU Caucus led by Congresswoman Alma Adams,” **said TMCF President and CEO Harry L. Williams**. “Congresswoman

Adams has been a strong leader and champion on Capitol Hill fighting for targeted COVID-19 relief dollars for HBCUs and MSIs, debt relief for our institutions, and an increase in our discretionary Title III appropriations - and she has been successful on all three of these fronts. In this unprecedented year, we are grateful for the steadfast support and leadership of Congresswoman Adams and we are ecstatic about the record amount of resources being appropriated for our nation's HBCUs.”

Lezli Baskerville, President & CEO of NAFEO stated, “NAFEO and the nation's HBCUs and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) are grateful to Congresswoman Alma Adams for continuing to lead bipartisan congressional efforts to ensure that HBCUs receive federal dollars more reflective of their tremendous impacts on America and their needs, owing in part to the disparities in funding HBCUs as compared with their HWCU counterparts. HBCUs are graduating disproportionate percentages of black and other diverse students in the growth and high-need disciplines. The funds that HBCUs will receive under the current agreement will enable HBCUs to continue providing tremendous benefits to our country, in healthcare, STEM, education professions, agriculture, and justice professions and so many others. The capital debt relief language will enable HBCUs to continue preparing their students and serving their communities in state-of-the art laboratories other facilities, while ensuring that their students, faculty, and staff, are equipped with the technology necessary to thrive in the COVID environment. HBCU students, primarily first generation and persons of color, will derive a fresh start from the efforts of Congresswoman Adams, Chairman Bobby Scott, their Congressional Black Caucus colleagues, and so many other Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate. These representatives understand the centrality of HBCUs to closing the American education, employment, economic, wealth, health, sustainability and justice gaps, enriching their service communities, and putting America on a course to realize her tremendous potential. The coronavirus has presented an even greater challenge for HBCU students, disproportionate percentages of whom are students of least advantage, as they seek to remain competitive in an environment that provides few opportunities due to high unemployment and a nation that itself is experiencing its greatest recession in recent memory. NAFEO will provide any resources and experience at its disposal in support of these efforts.”

The FY21 Omnibus spending bill achieves longstanding Democratic priorities, including:

- **Discharging loans made to HBCUs** under the HBCU Capital Financing Loan program, providing \$1.34 billion in relief.
- **Expanding the Pell Grant program** and making it easier for students to predict their eligibility, which will make hundreds of thousands of students newly eligible for Pell and increase award amounts for millions of current Pell recipients.

- **Making it easier for students to apply – and qualify – for federal student aid** by streamlining the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and expanding outreach and awareness activities to encourage FAFSA completion, with a focus on low-income students and families.
- **Expanding opportunities for justice-involved individuals** to get an education and successfully reenter their communities by providing incarcerated students access to Pell Grants.
- **Eliminating a confusing and punitive restriction** that limits eligibility for subsidized federal loans among low-income students.
- **Restoring Pell Grant eligibility for defrauded students**, including those who attended shuttered for-profit colleges like ITT Technical Institutes and Corinthian Colleges.

Congresswoman Alma Adams represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte) and serves as Vice Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture. Additionally, she serves on the House Financial Services Committee and the House Education & Labor Committee, where she serves as Chair of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee. In 2015, she co-founded the first bipartisan Congressional HBCU Caucus, which she continues to chair.

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