

Adams, Coons, Hill, Scott, and Colleagues Announce Introduction of Landmark Bill



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Date 2021-05-20 16:50



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The IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act is the most transformative legislation for HBCUs ever

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Yesterday, **Congresswoman Alma Adams (D-NC), Rep. French Hill (R-AR), and Senator Chris Coons (D-DE)** announced the introduction of the ***Institutional Grants for New Infrastructure, Technology, and Education for HBCU Excellence Act (IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act)***. The legislation would make historic investments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities to rectify over a century of systemic neglect.

[Video of the Press Conference is available for download here.](#)

[Video remarks from Senator Tim Scott \(R-SC\) introducing the bill are available here.](#)

Also attending the press conference were **Reps. Emanuel Cleaver, II (MO-05), Danny K. Davis (IL-07), Carolyn Maloney (NY-12), Deborah Ross (NC-02), Mary Gay Scanlon (PA-05), Marilyn Strickland (WA-10), and Nikema Williams (GA-05);** as well as **Sean Burns (TMCF), Lodriguez Murray (UNCF), and Lezli Baskerville (NAFEO).** In addition

to **Adams, Hill, Coons, and Scott**, original cosponsors of the **IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act** include **Reps. Terri Sewell (D-AL)** and **Mike Turner (R-OH)**.

“The **IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act** is the most transformative legislation for Historically Black Colleges and Universities ever,” **said Congresswoman Adams, Founder and Co-Chair of the Bipartisan HBCU Caucus**. “For over 150 years, HBCUs have been agents of equity, access, and excellence in education, despite being ignored and marginalized by federal and state governments. This historic, bipartisan bill changes that. The **IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act** invests in our HBCU facilities to give students state-of-the-art learning environments and enables HBCUs to continue to be a critical source of diversity in the workforce for another century and beyond.”

“I can think of no better way to improve educational opportunity and equity in a bipartisan way than by investing in the infrastructure of some of America’s greatest institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” **said Senator Chris Coons, Co-Chair of the Bipartisan HBCU Caucus**. “HBCUs like Delaware State University are a key source of graduates who contribute to the vitality of our nation and its economy, yet many of these institutions face underinvestment. Public and private HBCUs have [reported](#) tens of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance backlogs. It is past time that we support HBCUs in modernizing their outdated legacy infrastructure in order to build outstanding campuses. Our proposed investment is timely and appropriate and incredibly important for the future of HBCUs.”

“Arkansas is home to four HBCUs and I am pleased to co-lead this bipartisan and bicameral bill with my colleagues to further bolster HBCUs,” **said Rep. French Hill, Co-Chair of the Bipartisan HBCU Caucus**. “The bipartisan IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act reflects a good faith effort to work across the aisle in order to ensure that HBCUs have a bright future ahead of them so they and their students will continue to succeed. This measure encourages private philanthropy accompanying public state and federal investments on HBCU campuses to boost their long term competitiveness.”

“Historically Black Colleges and Universities open doors to opportunity for thousands of students each year, many of whom come from underserved communities,” **said Senator Tim Scott, Co-Chair of the Bipartisan HBCU Caucus**. “For decades, HBCUs have educated and produced top-notch graduates in every field—all while operating on minimal budgets. I can only imagine what more they will accomplish with proper funding, and I am proud that my colleagues and I have come together to support this transformational, bipartisan bill.”

While only representing roughly 3 percent of all four-year colleges and universities, HBCUs produce upwards of 17 percent of all bachelor’s degrees awarded to African Americans. Additionally, HBCUs enroll a disproportionately high percentage of first generation and low-income students, nearly 60 percent, and outperform their peers in supporting and graduating these students.

The incredible success of HBCUs has been achieved despite over a century of systemic underfunding at both the state and federal levels. Too often, HBCUs are forced to navigate the effects of chronic underfunding while also lacking access to alternate sources of capital available to other institutions.

The **IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act** invests in infrastructure at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This legislation recognizes the contributions of these institutions in the most important way possible: by affording them the support and investment needed to deepen their transformational work. Specifically, it would authorize funds to:

- Utilize public and private investments to renovate, repair, modernize, or construct new campus facilities, including instructional, research, and residential spaces;
- Provide access to campus-wide, reliable high-speed broadband to support digital learning and long-term technological capacity;
- Develop campus facilities to support community-based partnerships that provide students and community members with academic, health, and social services;
- Procure equipment and technology needed to facilitate high-quality research and instruction;
- Preserve buildings with historic significance; and
- Ensure the resilience, safety, and sustainability of campus facilities.

Congresswoman Alma Adams represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte, Mecklenburg County). In 2015, she founded the first bipartisan Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Caucus in Congress. In 2019, her previous landmark legislation to invest in HBCUs, the FUTURE Act, was signed into law. She is a double graduate of North Carolina A&T, the largest HBCU by enrollment in the United States.

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