

Congress of the United States

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Small Business

2361 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515-6315

February 5, 2020

Mr. Allen Gutierrez
Associate Administrator
Small Business Administration
409 3rd St. N.W.
Washington D.C. 20416

Dear Associate Administrator Gutierrez:

We are writing in regard to the Small Business Administration's (SBA) engagement with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

As you know, the Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Investigations, Oversight, and Regulations held a hearing on April 30, 2019, entitled, "Lost Opportunities? SBA's Engagement with Historically Black Colleges and Universities". At that time, you testified that SBA can take three significant steps to strengthen HBCU outreach, specifically: create an intra-agency working group to improve accountability, improve data collection, and expand the SBIR tour to include HBCUs. We appreciate your commitment to prioritizing these issues and was pleased to learn of the steps that you have taken since the hearing to improve SBA's engagement with HBCUs.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on December 13, 2019, entitled, "Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Engagement with Historically Black Colleges and Universities", (GAO-20-41) that examined SBA's efforts to foster entrepreneurship with HBCUs. In that report, GAO laid out three recommendations:

- 1) The SBA Administrator should assign and document clear roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines for the White House Initiative on HBCUs.
- 2) The Associate Administrators of the Office of Entrepreneurial Development and Office of Field Operations should communicate efforts to support HBCUs to relevant district offices and SBDCs.
- 3) The Associate Administrator of the Office of Entrepreneurial Development should ensure that reporting mechanisms collect the information needed to establish, monitor, and assess efforts to support HBCUs.

In order to better understand SBA's progress toward meeting its own initiatives and GAO's recommendations, the Committee requests that the SBA provide written answers to the following questions, no later than February 21, 2020:

- 1) Please provide a copy of the SBA's FY2020 agency plan for the White House Initiative on HBCU's.
 - a. Have clear lines of communication and reporting between SBA HQ, field offices, and resource partners been established and utilized? If not, when does SBA plan to have clear lines of communication and reporting in place?

- 2) At the April 30, 2019 Subcommittee hearing, and again in the 2019 Federal Agencies Priority Brief on the White House Initiative on HBCU's, you discussed the creation of an intra-agency working group.
 - a. What is the status of the creation and implementation of the intra-agency working group and who is spearheading it?
 - b. What are the goals and what resources have been allocated to ensure its success?
 - c. Has the working group produced any reports or products regarding HBCU outreach? If so, please provide copies to the Committee.

- 3) At the April 30, 2019 Subcommittee hearing you discussed the implementation of a "SharePoint type" data collection system to more easily and more accurately collect data. What is the status of this system and have there been challenges in administration or adaptation of the new system?
 - a. If the new system is not in place, how are regional and district offices currently collecting data?
 - b. Have any new policies or guidance been developed to help district offices better report on their HBCU-related outreach?

- 4) How were HBCUs incorporated into the 2019 SBIR Road Tour? What are the plans for their incorporation in a 2020 SBIR Road Tour?

- 5) How is SBA ensuring that a diverse array (i.e. small, large, private, public) of HBCUs are included in the SBDCs funding opportunity outreach plans?

- 6) There are nearly 700 Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) across the United States that serve a diverse coalition of students, faculty, and local communities. How is SBA planning to engage these institutions through outreach, resources, and Entrepreneurial Development programs?

- 7) Specifically, how does SBA plan to implement each of GAO's recommendations in a timely fashion?

We look forward to your timely response and continued work to expand entrepreneurial development opportunities at HBCUs in the future.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Chairwoman, Small Business Committee



Ross Spano
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Investigations, Oversight, and Regulations



Judy Chu
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on
Investigations, Oversight, and Regulations



Alma S. Adams
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Vice-Chair, Small Business Committee