

Prioritize HBCUs for Pandemic Assistance

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PROBLEM

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were founded primarily in the Reconstruction period after the Civil War and helped to provide educational opportunities denied to Black Slaves. Research shows that HBCUs provide important opportunities for economic mobility. On average these institutions do a better job than any other type of U.S. higher educational institution of vaulting the lowest income students into the top earning ranges ([Reeves & Joo, 2017](#)). According to the [National Science Foundation](#) (2017),

“HBCUs have awarded a large share of bachelor's degrees earned by African American students in STEM. In addition, eleven of the top fifteen baccalaureate institutions of African American STEM doctorate recipients from 2013 to 2017 are HBCUs.”

Yet, HBCUs are struggling financially. The challenges these institutions face due to COVID-19 exacerbated the financial strain many institutions were already facing. Most HBCUs, and more succinctly the 50 private institutions, receive little to no state support. The lack of state support makes private institutions more dependent on enrollment. Meaning, if they suspend in-person classes due to COVID-19 for a long time, it may lead to a prolonged dip in enrollment, which will place HBCUs, especially private institutions, at great risk of closure.

KEY STATISTIC

75% of HBCUs are located in the 12 Southeastern states.

SOLUTIONS

- **Public investment to ensure HBCUs survive the pandemic.** The benefits HBCUs provide are monumentally important for the Black community. Black institutions educate 50% of African American teachers and 40% of African American health professionals, which is not to include the 70% of Black dentists and physicians who earned degrees at HBCUs (Gasman, 2013). The solvency of these institutions is of great importance as they produce Black leadership that is responsible for the diversification within industry throughout the country.
- **State-appointed chancellor or liaison for HBCUs.** An HBCU chancellor would be a position in the governor's office who would be responsible for ensuring that public HBCUs were properly and equitably funded. The Chancellor would also identify governmental grant monies available to private HBCUs and streamline the processes of application to ensure funding was adequately allocated to private HBCUs.