

**Testimony Provided to the  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate**

Dr. Walter M. Kimbrough

President, Dillard University

Chairman, Council of Presidents, United Negro College Fund (UNCF)

March 8, 2022

## Biography

The seventh president of Dillard University, Dr. Walter M. Kimbrough's tenure is one marked by achievements that have lifted the University's national profile. Under President Kimbrough's leadership, Dillard has risen to new heights in fundraising, enrollment, academics, co-curricular programming and student support. Kimbrough has also become an engaged community voice, as well. A proud native of Atlanta, President Kimbrough was his high school's salutatorian and student body president in 1985. He went on to earn his bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia, his master's from Miami University in Ohio and his Ph.D. in higher education from Georgia State University.

President Kimbrough's career was built in student affairs, and he has been recognized for his research and writings on historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and African American men in college. At the age of 32, he served as the vice president for student affairs at Albany State University. Prior to that, he served at Emory University, Georgia State University and Old Dominion University. President Kimbrough's path led him to Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas where, at 37-years-old, he was named the college's 12th president.

Beginning his presidency at Dillard University in 2012, President Kimbrough took on the daunting task of continuing the University's recovery from Hurricane Katrina. After much anticipation, he and his team completed the opening of all of the University's residence halls in 2014. A large Katrina task that loomed, however, was a \$168.8 million loan issued by the U.S. government. In 2013, President Kimbrough negotiated a five-year forbearance which ultimately led to the loan being forgiven in 2018. In 2019, Dillard completed a \$6.5 million FEMA hazard mitigation project which included installing a subsurface drainage system on campus.

The Kimbrough years have also seen improvements in enrollment and academics. Amid an enrollment increase, Dillard saw its retention increase from 61% to 70% and its graduation rate increase from 31% to 52%. Notably, incoming students' high school GPAs increased more than 18% and ACT scores increased 14%. To serve local students in need of flexibility in their studies, the University brought back the Evening and Weekend Studies program after an 11-year hiatus. With an eye on elevating unique academic programs, President Kimbrough established physics and film studies as signature programs. Along with the focus on film studies, one of Dillard's fastest growing majors, came film and television productions that shot partially on location at Dillard while utilizing the talents of students and even President Kimbrough, who made an appearance on "NCIS: New Orleans." The physics program garnered national attention as one of the top three producers of African Americans receiving bachelor's degrees in the discipline. In 2021, Study.com ranked film studies #13 and the biology program #8 nationally. President Kimbrough also turned his attention to Dillard's most revered program, nursing, which restructured and launched its RN-BSN program in 2016 and has seen a 100% employment rate among its graduates. Dillard also launched its food studies program and Urban Water Management Certificate Program, the only one of its kind in Louisiana. Additionally, the College of Business obtained accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) in 2019.

Co-curricular programs and centers achieved new levels under President Kimbrough's leadership. In 2014, Dillard relaunched the Ray Charles Program in African-American Material Culture—the only one of its kind in the nation—with the help of a \$1 million grant from the Ray Charles Foundation. In 2016, a full-time advisor was named to guide Dillard's Pre-Law Program and a full-time advisor

was named to lead the Pre-Health Advisory Program in 2018. In 2021, 93% of the pre-law students who applied to law schools were accepted, paving the way for the program to hire its first full-time director later that year. In response to the turbulent summer of 2020, Dillard launched the Center for Racial Justice which later received a gift of \$5 million from the law firm Kirkland & Ellis as part of the landmark Maryland HBCU settlement spearheaded by Dillard board of trustees chair and alumnus Michael D. Jones.

Student support and leadership have taken center stage under the former student affairs administrator. To support students who experience financial gaps in completing their degrees, Dillard launched the SAFE (Student Aid for Financial Emergencies) Fund in 2013. As of December of 2021, the fund has raised over \$4 million, assisting over 1,500 students. The University opened its Classic Clothes Closet to provide students with clothing for job interviews, and it opened a food pantry in 2016 to assist students who experience food insecurity. To boost student health, the Daughters of Charity (now DePaul Community Health Center) began operations in the Student Union in 2014. To create a more inclusive environment at Dillard, President Kimbrough launched and chaired an LGBTQ working group on campus to share ideas and develop programming after participating in the Human Rights Campaign HBCU Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Briefing. The University also earned the distinction of becoming the only American university partner of the Melton Foundation. In 2016, President Kimbrough urged the hiring of a full-time Title IX/ADA coordinator for Dillard.

Without question, President Kimbrough is known for his competitive spirit. With his investment in athletics, the Bleu Devils and Lady Bleu Devils have won Gulf Coast Athletic Conference (GCAC) championships in basketball, track and field, and cross country. In 2016, the University won the GCAC Thomas Howell Cup for the first time. Dillard won its first national championship in 2021 when the men's 4x100 outdoor relay team placed first at the NAIA Track & Field Championships. Beyond the field of play, Dillard has seen success with its nationally ranked mock trial and speech and debate teams.

Dillard has experienced record levels of fundraising under the Kimbrough administration. Alumni giving increased from 4% to 23%, and the University received its largest single alumni gift in history to the tune of \$1 million. Dillard received its largest private gift in 2020 when MacKenzie Scott made a donation of \$5 million, and the University's participation in #GivingTuesday grew from \$60,000 in gifts in 2016 to \$1.3 million in gifts in 2021. Most notably, the University's endowment has experienced extraordinary growth from \$48.6 million to \$105 million under President Kimbrough's leadership.

With his dynamic reputation as a contemporary higher education leader, President Kimbrough's influence has drawn some of the most notable names of the day to The Oaks. The likes of former attorney general Eric Holder, Michael Eric Dyson, Issa Rae, Stacey Abrams, Bryan Stevenson, Jurnee Smollett and soon-to-be Pulitzer Prize winner Jericho Brown have visited with the Dillard community. But nothing has created more of a buzz than Dillard's commencement speakers selected by President Kimbrough. One of the most viral commencement speeches was given when Denzel Washington spoke to the class of 2015. Former first lady Michelle Obama drew Dillard's largest ever commencement audience at 7,000 attendees. Graduates have also been treated to Jeff Johnson, Terrance J, Janelle Monáe, Chance the Rapper and Michael Ealy.

President Kimbrough has also leveraged his influence to be a voice in the community. In 2014, in the wake of the Michael Brown killing, Dillard hosted a Black Male Summit. In 2016, Kimbrough advocated for Andrew Jones, the Amite High School valedictorian who was denied participation in graduation due to a facial hair policy. In 2018, the University hosted a convening for Louisiana's HBCUs, the White House Initiative on HBCUs, UNCF and several of the state's major economic organizations to identify ways for HBCUs to more actively engage in economic development. In 2020, Kimbrough advocated for Ka'Mauri Harrison, a then-fourth grade student who was suspended for having a BB gun in view during a distance class from his bedroom. He has also emerged as one of the leaders discussing free speech on college campuses.

Dillard has enjoyed an elevated national profile, thanks to President Kimbrough's influence. In 2015, the University was named by KIPP as one of "Ten Colleges Doing Right By Kids" and was also featured for a week in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's 2016 HBCU series. Dillard was named, in 2017, as one of the top 10 environmentally friendly HBCUs by The 107 and was recognized later that year for its \$83 million economic impact on the local and regional economies by the United Negro College Fund. As part of Dillard's 150th anniversary celebration in 2019, WDSU-TV produced and aired a documentary on the University's history. "The Jewel of Gentilly" was also recognized as one of the country's most beautiful college campuses by Cosmopolitan in 2020 and also by Intelligent.com in 2021. The University captured national attention in 2021 when journalist Malcolm Gladwell interviewed President Kimbrough and featured Dillard on his highly regarded "Revisionist History" podcast.

Under President Kimbrough's guidance, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) reaffirmed Dillard University's accreditation through 2030. The University also renamed the DUICEF building Michael and Shaun Jones Hall, and the atrium of the Professional Schools Building was named the Harold and Rhea Lucien Pavilion.

Known by the moniker, "The Hip Hop Prez," President Kimbrough is widely recognized for his adroit use of social media. He was cited in 2010 by BachelorsDegree.org as one of 25 college presidents you should follow on Twitter. In 2013, he was also cited by Education Dive as one of "10 college presidents on Twitter who are doing it right," and he was named to Josie Ahlquist's "25 Higher Education Presidents to Follow on Twitter." Ahlquist recognized President Kimbrough again in 2017 as one of her "20 Higher Education Presidents to Follow on Instagram." President Kimbrough's use of social media has been noted in articles by The Chronicle of Higher Education and in Dan Zaiontz's book "#FollowTheLeader: Lessons in Social Media Success from #HigherEd CEOs."

President Kimbrough's leadership has been recognized frequently. In 2010, he made the coveted Ebony Magazine Power 100 list of the doers and influencers in the African American community. In 2013, he was named to The Griot 100: History Makers in the Making. The following year, President Kimbrough was named HBCU Male President of the Year by HBCU Digest, and he was named by TheBestSchools.org as one of the "20 Most Interesting College Presidents" in 2016. The HBCU Campaign Fund named him one of the "10 Most Dominant HBCU Leaders of 2018" and College Cliffs named President Kimbrough one of their "50 Top U.S. College and University Presidents" in 2020. In 2021, President Kimbrough was a recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award from his alma mater, Georgia State.

A 1986 initiate of the Zeta Pi chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. at the University of Georgia, President Kimbrough has leveraged his fraternity experiences and his student affairs research to become one of the country's experts in Greek life. President Kimbrough was the Alpha Phi Alpha College Brother of the Year for the Southern Region and served as the Southern Region assistant vice president. He has forged a national reputation as an expert on fraternities and sororities with specific expertise regarding historically Black, Latin and Asian groups. He is the author of the book "Black Greek 101: The Culture, Customs and Challenges of Black Fraternities and Sororities" and has served as an expert witness in a number of hazing cases. Because of his work, President Kimbrough received the Association of Fraternity Advisors' New Professional of the Year Award in 1994 and Kent Gardner Award in 2016.

After completing his bachelor's degree, President Kimbrough went on to earn his master's from Miami University in Ohio and his Ph.D. in higher education administration from Georgia State University. President Kimbrough and his wife, Adria Nobles Kimbrough, an attorney, are the proud parents of two children, Lydia Nicole and Benjamin Barack.

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## Full Testimony

### **Introduction**

Chairman Dick Durbin, Ranking Member Chuck Grassley, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Dr. Walter Kimbrough, and I serve as the seventh President of Dillard University (Dillard or the University). Dillard is one of over 100 accredited historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), a classification of higher education institutions that the Higher Education Act of 1965 define as being established prior to 1964 and having had primary mission of the education of Black Americans. It is worth noting that, according to law, HBCUs are not in the classification of institutions known as Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)—colleges or universities that enroll a specific percentage of students from some particular minority groups.

### **About Dillard University**

Dillard was specifically born from the union of two institutions that served as equity-building engines—New Orleans University and Straight University. While Dillard’s origins can be traced back to 1869 with the founding of precursor Thompson Biblical Institute, Dillard—under its current name—was established in 1930 after appeals for financial stability resulted in consolidation of New Orleans and Straight Universities. The University is affiliated with both the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. The University is named after James Hardy Dillard, an educational reformer who promoted racial harmony, who showed determination to close racial barriers in education even though his parents had been slave owners. After emancipation, Mr. Dillard was dissatisfied with the treatment of former enslaved people which helped propel him as one of the best-known proponents of improved educational opportunities for African Americans in the South. Of Mr. Dillard’s unique versatility and effectiveness in community, it is said that Booker T. Washington once proclaimed that he could speak “to the poorest Negro in Alabama the same way he speaks to President Taft.”

Today, Dillard University is a private HBCU with a student population over 1,300 students and an endowment of \$100 million. Dillard offers over 35 majors, including Bachelor of Arts, Bachelors of Science, and Bachelors of Science in Nursing. We are one of the 37 member-institutions of the UNCF (United Negro College Fund), and I serve as chairman of the council of member-institution presidents of UNCF. In 2005 like much of New Orleans, Dillard suffered extensive flood damage in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. I am pleased to say that the institution came roaring back, and we are now experiencing an uptick in enrollment and college rankings. The

University is in the top 20% of National Liberal Arts Universities and a top-rated institution on the U.S. News' Best HBCUs list.

### **HBCUs: Impact and Unique Value to the Nation's Higher Education System**

The first HBCU was created in 1837 to provide African Americans access to higher education. Noted for their contributions in educating Black, low-income, and educationally disadvantaged Americans, the 100-accredited HBCUs today constitute the class of institutions that satisfy the statutory definition of the term "HBCU" as defined in the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (HEA).<sup>1</sup>

HBCUs disproportionately enroll low-income, first-generation and academically underprepared college students—precisely the students that the country most needs to obtain college degrees. In 2018:

- Nearly 300,000 students attended HBCUs<sup>2</sup>;
- More than 75 percent of HBCU students were African Americans; and
- Upwards of 75 percent of undergraduate students at HBCUs received federal Pell Grants, and over 80 percent of these students received federal loans.<sup>3</sup>

HBCUs comprised 3 percent of all two- and four-year non-profit colleges and universities, yet they:

- Enroll 10 percent of African American undergraduates;
- Produce 17 percent of all African American college graduates with bachelor's degrees; and
- Graduate 24 percent of African Americans with bachelor's degrees in STEM fields.<sup>4</sup>

A 2015 Gallup survey confirms that HBCUs are providing African American students with a better college experience than African American students at other colleges and universities. 55 percent of African American HBCU graduates say their college

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of an HBCU can be found in Section 322(2) of the HEA.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Digest of education statistics 2019* [Table 313.20]. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_313.20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_313.20.asp)

<sup>3</sup> UNCF Public Policy and Government Affairs calculations using 2018 data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Data shows that out of 257,451 total undergraduate students at HBCUs, 159,101 students were receiving Pell Grants and 162,179 students were receiving federal loans.

<sup>4</sup> UNCF Patterson calculations using U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

prepared them well for post-college life versus 29 percent for African American graduates of other institutions.<sup>5</sup>

HBCUs attained these results at an affordable price for students—that is, the cost of attendance at HBCUs is about 30 percent lower, on average, than other colleges—despite limited operating budgets and endowments that are roughly half the typical size of other four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities.

Since our founding, HBCUs have been, and continue to be, under-resourced institutions. An issue brief produced by ACE (American Council on Education) and UNCF revealed the following:

- Public HBCUs rely more heavily on federal, state, and local funding in comparison with their non-HBCU counterparts (54 percent of overall revenue vs 38 percent);
- Private HBCUs depend a little bit more on tuition dollars than their non-HBCUs counterparts (45 percent compared with 37 percent);
- Private gifts, grants, and contracts constitute a smaller portion of overall revenue at private HBCUs compared to their non-HBCU counterparts (17 percent vs 25 percent);
- Public and Private HBCUs experienced the largest declines in federal funding per full-time equivalent student between 2003-2015; and
- In both the public and private sectors, HBCU endowments lag behind those of non-HBCUs by at least 70 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Despite being under-resourced institutions, HBCUs have a large economic impact that often goes unnoticed by most. In 2017, UNCF released a report detailing the economic impact of HBCUs. The report revealed that in 2014, the impact of HBCUs on their regional economies included:

- \$10.3 billion in initial spending, which includes spending by the institution for personnel services, spending by the institution for operating expenses, and spending by students;
- An employment impact of 134,090 jobs, which approximately 43 percent were on-campus jobs and 57 percent were off-campus jobs;

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<sup>5</sup> Gallup, Inc. (2015). *Gallup-USA funds minority college graduates report*. Retrieved from UNCF Website: [https://www.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/USA\\_Funds\\_Minority\\_Report\\_GALLUP-2.pdf](https://www.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/USA_Funds_Minority_Report_GALLUP-2.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Williams, K.L. & Davis, B.L. (2019). *Public and private investments and divestments in historically black colleges and universities*. Retrieved from American Council on Education Website: <https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Public-and-Private-Investments-and-Divestments-in-HBCUs.aspx>



- \$10.1 billion in terms of gross regional product, which is a measure of the value of production of all industries;
- A work-life earnings of \$130 billion for the Class of 2014, which is 56 percent more than they could expect to earn without their 2014 certificates or degrees; and
- A total economic impact of \$14.8 billion.<sup>7</sup>

In regards to Dillard University specifically, my institution had the following economic impact on its regional economy according to the UNCF report:

- \$83,000,000 in annual economic impact;
- 780 jobs supported annually; and
- \$472 million in lifetime earnings for one graduating class.

In addition to the positive impact HBCUs make on the overall economy, HBCUs also have a strong impact academically when observed at the state and local level. An recent report to be released by UNCF shows that:

- HBCUs comprised 8.5 percent of the four-year institutions across the 21 states and territories in the analysis;
- Across the 21 states and territories in the analysis, HBCUs enrolled, on average, 24 percent of all black undergraduates pursuing a bachelor's degree in a college or university in 2016; and
- Across the 21 states and territories in the analysis, on average, 26 percent of all black bachelor's degree recipients graduated from an HBCU in 2016.

### **HBCUs and the Ongoing Legacy of Discrimination and Intimidation**

Although the date certain to qualify to be an HBCU was as late as 1964, many of the institutions have their roots in the exact time period when the Civil War was ending and it was still dangerous to teach Black Americans how to read, write, and otherwise learn. In fact, the histories of HBCUs that existed in the mid-to-late 1800s are full efforts to disrupt their mission of educating either freed slaves or the progeny of slaves. There were overt actions like lynchings and fires; and then there were the ongoing more covert actions—denying of capital access, granting capital at much worse rates and conditions, and the overall assumption that the institutions were worth less governmental and philanthropic investment.

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<sup>7</sup> Humphreys, J.M. (2017). *HBCUs make America strong: The positive economic impact of historically black colleges and universities*. Retrieved from UNCF Website: <https://www.uncf.org/programs/hbcu-impact>

Despite the fact that our great Nation has made tremendous strides—after all I testify before this committee with a doctorate in higher education—there is still much further that we must go together. Unfortunately, there is a loud, boisterous minority in the United States that conjure the thoughts of the days gone by when obviously racists individuals intimidated the students, faculty, and staff of our HBCUs. Today, those individuals have sought to intimidate, disrupt, terrorize, and adversely impact the mental health and sense of security of our students, faculty, and staff. In the first two months of 2022, there have been well over 50 calls or messages alleging a bomb was placed on an HBCU campus. Greater than one out of every three HBCUs has been threatened by this heinous terrorism. However, every HBCU has felt the chilling result of this target and race related effort to disrupt and intimidate.

### **HBCUs and the Current Bomb Threat Crisis**

On the morning of January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at least eight HBCUs received bomb threats. Those institutions include Howard University, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Prairie View A&M University, North Carolina Central University, Florida Memorial University, Norfolk State University, Spelman College, and fellow New Orleans institution Xavier University at Louisiana. When these threats took place, it was disconcerting to all HBCUs that federal law enforcement—at the time—refused to acknowledge what we all felt: the racial motivation for these threats. As a matter of fact, after these eight threats, there was no coordinated briefing for the HBCU community. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) area offices were in touch with the affected institutions, but it seemed that all HBCUs, their students, and their way of life were impacted. The harm was, indeed, the terror. HBCUs increasingly appeal to a segment of students because the institutions allow those students, largely young African Americans, to be come of age and learn who they are and want to become in a place where they can be comfortable and secure. The rash of threats, taking place merely two days prior to the one-year anniversary of the January 6<sup>th</sup> Capitol Hill insurrection, threatened that valued sense of security.

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, at least seven HBCUs received bomb threats. Those institutions include Southern University and A&M College, Howard University, Bethune-Cookman University, Albany State University, Bowie State University, Alabama A&M University, and Delaware State University. Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, a Historically Black Graduate Institution in Los Angeles was the eighth institution that received a threat on that day.

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the first day of Black History Month, at least eighteen HBCUs received bomb threats. Those institutions include Shorter College, Philanders Smith College, Arkansas Baptist College, the University of the District of Columbia, Howard

University, Edward Waters University, Spelman College, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Xavier University of Louisiana, Coppin State University, Morgan State University, Jackson State University, Alcorn State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Rust College, Tougaloo College, and Harris-Stowe State University.

After this round of threats, to say our community was on edge would be an understatement. Local law enforcement was responsive, did full sweeps of the campuses, and no bombs were found. However, it is obvious that someone or some individuals were seeking to attack our way of life. They wanted to steal our students' sense of security. They wanted to disrupt our class schedule. They were terrorizing us, and we had no recourse. It is worth noting that since the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), 20% of college students say their mental health has worsened. Now, add to those challenges the now increasing threat that many institutions had bomb threats called in. Buildings were cleared. Students were sent home. Some virtual learning was reconvened for a day or so because students were afraid to return to their campus.

While individual institutions were in touch with local law enforcement and the FBI, our HBCU umbrella organization, UNCF, was in touch with the White House. This is when we first learned that the Administration was taking this matter seriously and that the President had been briefed. UNCF, in the strongest possible terms, suggested a true FBI briefing for the HBCU community. Prior, on January 24<sup>th</sup>, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona held what was billed as a briefing on HBCU threats. While historic that both cabinet leaders were meeting with HBCU presidents, the hour-long engagement was largely a discussion of successes the Administration has had for HBCUs. The community craved information on the ongoing threats and an end to the sense of terror that was growing. In response to our UNCF-White House outreach, on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the FBI briefed the HBCU community along with some in the Jewish and Christian church community who had all received threats.

We understood that the FBI would not release any information to us that would compromise their ongoing investigation. While we were being briefed by them, news outlets were reporting that tech-savvy juveniles were responsible for the HBCU bomb threats. This was never confirmed to us by the FBI. However, at the same time as the February 2<sup>nd</sup> FBI briefing, the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) was under threats. Their alleged assailant was Matthew Christopher Harris, and he was arrested in Boulder, Colorado. He was shown as arrested, with the FBI showing a full sense of force for all to see. The arrest was covered by local and national media. The fact that those who are threatening HBCU campuses with phone calls and messages

alleging bomb placements have not been identified and shown to come to justice gives the—hopefully unintended—appearance that one can threaten HBCUs and get away with it. If this continues, we are definitely concerned that the copy-cats will ensure these threats, and the terror and disruption they bring, continue.

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, one institution received a bomb threat: Spelman College.

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022, two institutions received bomb threats: Howard University and Fisk University.

On February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, three institutions received bomb threats: Fayetteville State University, Claflin University, and Winston-Salem State University.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, one institution received a bomb threat: Hampton University.

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at least three institutions received a bomb threat. Those institutions include Norfolk State University, Elizabeth City State University, and Dillard University.

When Dillard University received its threat, I happened to be on travel. Since I was not on campus, the University's leadership team handled the serious issue the way we trained. However, when we called our local law enforcement, they informed us that even though this was Dillard's first bomb threat, it was at least the third at an HBCU in New Orleans between January and February. To either shelter in place or clear a campus and perform a sweep is costly for our local law enforcement. They informed us that they simply do not have the manpower to perform the campus sweep every time there is a bomb threat because to date none of the threats have materialized in the actual finding a bomb. This is extremely problematic, because the HBCU community is victimized. Now, it appears that we are the ones who are "crying wolf." My fear is that one day there will be a call, a threat, and there will be a bomb. Since there have been so many allegations without an actual bomb, local law enforcement may not conduct a full sweep of a campus; and the result will be deadly.

Thankfully, there have not been further threats since February 25<sup>th</sup>, but this is little solace. To date, no one has been brought to justice, these cases are not closed, and the sense of terror has not deteriorated. While it is worth noting the resilient nature of HBCUs and their students, most of whom are rising to the level of higher education despite all the odds against them, this is not a scenario these young people should have to endure. In fact, there is no American that should live under these circumstances which seek to rob HBCUs of the security of a simple routine day.

I do want to say that while the ultimate response we seek is resolution and justice, the FBI has been responsive on the local level. The area offices have offered for academic division to visit any and all campuses and consult on ways to harden the campuses and other protections, such as cyber security. I will say more about this in the next section of the testimony.

I want to close this portion of the testimony with a word on finances. The threats that have impacted HBCUs have caused a financial burden on the group of institutions of higher education which are tuition dependent and enroll the highest percentage of low to moderate income students of any other similar group of institutions. 75% of all HBCU students are Pell Grant eligible. With the funding difficulties which have plagued the HBCU sector since inception, to now either pay to install new cameras, integrate existing cameras into a local police feed, increase security personnel, or install physical barriers to harden campuses would be another financial burden on institutions which cannot handle another such financial weight. Not to mention the disruption in classes, and those are the most basic element for which our students paying.

### **Not Just the Threat of Bombs, Other Threats**

Last week, I was with my colleagues at the UNCF meetings here in Washington, D.C. I was disturbed to learn from my peers that the concerns extend well beyond the bomb threats which have been well publicized. HBCUs have received messages recently threatening them if their institutions should choose to be a polling place in upcoming elections. Campus murals are routinely vandalized in a brash and demeaning way. Phone calls come in calling our personnel the “n” word, demeaning our institutions for fulfilling their mission, and threatening our personnel. The uptick in cyber security threats is also alarming. I have lost count of how many of my fellow HBCU college presidents have relayed that their financial and most sensitive information has been targeted criminals, adversaries, and terrorists. While UNCF and groups like the Student Freedom Initiative (SFI), a non-profit chaired by Mr. Robert F. Smith, seek to help our institutions prepare for these ongoing and increasing cyber threats, the perpetrators are constantly evolving their method of attack.

### **Recommendations**

On behalf of the HBCU community, I will offer recommendations. However, the list may be subject to change. We are still processing these threats, and we may have more to say soon.

1. The FBI needs to bring those who have perpetrated these terroristic calls, instant messages, and online posts to justice. They should be shown in custody as a deterrent to any other malicious individuals that these threats will not be

tolerated. Again, note the recent threats that were made to UCLA mentioned earlier in my testimony. Their alleged assailant was caught, treated seriously, and the attention to the case deterred others.

2. HBCUs need more funding for security. The Department of Justice has two programs which seek to harden campuses for these kinds of threats. The issue is that the programs funnel the money through the state governments. The states have not given Congress a list of which institutions received the funding. Furthermore, HBCUs have a long track record of being treated unfairly by their states. If you look at the lawsuit won by Maryland HBCUs and other issues where funding is obviously owed to institutions like Tennessee State University, you find that states tend to target resources to their “flagship” institutions. By doing so, states often underfund HBCUs. The states are not the best avenue to make sure that HBCUs receive necessary funding.
3. If Congress reauthorizes programs which will seek to harden HBCU campuses and prepare them for these kinds of threats, then Congress should name HBCUs in the authorizing law and provide report language in the annual appropriations process—each year—to ensure the departments and agencies make sure funding goes where it is necessary. This recommendation is imperative, because many who administer federal funds do not understand the unique nature of HBCUs and may conflate HBCUs with MSIs like Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). MSIs like HSIs are not the ones under threat. HBCUs are. As such, HBCUs need targeted assistance to respond to this moment of threat that no other group of higher education institutions are experiencing in these strong numbers. Also, those who administer departments and agencies will only do what they are directed to do and linking any directives with funding is the best way to ensure that bureaucracy follows through. Otherwise, it is my experience that the funding will not get to HBCUs.
4. Members of Congress should receive a classified briefing to understand the nature of these HBCU threats. This level of briefing is something which we in the HBCU community may not be able to have, but Members of Congress are routinely trusted with this level of intelligence. The HBCU community has been disturbed with the fact that the senators and representatives interested in bringing these threats to a close have either not been briefed or it has taken until as late as last week for them to have been informed. We want to believe that federal law enforcement is taking these repeated and problematic threats seriously, but the flow of information is necessary. More must be done.

5. The mental health impact of our student body should be a paramount concern. Our institutions have been approached by the executives from the American Psychological Association (APA) noting that the triple impact of COVID-19, the ongoing racial reckoning in America, and the bomb threats on HBCU campuses are having real and lasting impacts on our students. We desire to partner with APA to support our students; however, resources are lacking. We will write your colleagues on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) and the Senate Committee on Appropriations with further recommendations.
6. Congress should finish the process started last week by the U.S. Senate. Thursday evening, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Senate passed S. Res. 534 “on hotline.” This was a simple resolution co-sponsored by a group of 45 bipartisan members of this body, and led by Senator Tim Scott and Senator Chris Coons, that condemns the HBCU bomb threats and names each affected institution. The House of Representatives may soon pass a very similar simple resolution. That would mean that both houses of Congress would have condemned the HBCU bomb threats in a bipartisan and bicameral way, sending a signal to the nation that this type of terror will not be tolerated.

We are still working on additional recommendations to help with the integration of cameras on particular campuses with the local law enforcement, issues of hardening campus infrastructure, and how best to respond to the cyber-attacks. Also, there is so much about the HBCU bomb threats we simply do not know because of a lack of publicly available information. When additional recommendations are prepared, we will write to this committee. I also ask that as this Committee weighs the recommendations above and how the Senate should respond to the HBCU bomb threats, please feel free to reach out to UNCF’s senior vice president for public policy and government affairs, Mr. Lodriguez V. Murray. He will be as helpful to you as he is to our institutions.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Dillard University is one over thirty HBCUs in January and February 2022 which have received well over fifty messages stating that there is a bomb present on our campuses. While we are glad that no bombs have been found on HBCU campuses, yet, in 2022; the concerns that no one has been brought to justice and a lack of information around the ongoing case is extremely disconcerting. The threats extend beyond bomb threats to defacing property, other threatening phone calls, and threats against polling places on our campuses. We have recommendations on how Congress can be most helpful. The HBCU community is grateful for the bipartisan

passage of S. Res. 534 and look forward to the House of Representatives passing a similar resolution—hopefully in similar bipartisan fashion—to stand with HBCUs and against efforts of terror.

It is an honor to be asked to present this testimony, and I commend you for your service and for addressing these important issues.

Thank you.