



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

H.R. 1494, the “Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Homeland Security Partnership Act”

As Introduced by Representative Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

- In February 2017, President Trump established an initiative to provide equitable opportunities for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to participate in Federal programs.¹ The White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, established by Executive Order 13779, noted that the Nation’s more than 100 HBCUs “have made, and continue to make, extraordinary contributions to the general welfare and prosperity of our country”.²
- Pursuant to the Executive Order, in May 2018, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS or Department) submitted a plan to the Department of Education describing its efforts to strengthen the capacity of HBCUs to participate in applicable Federal programs and initiatives.³
- In its annual plan to the Department of Education, DHS, *the third largest Executive Department*, outlined its priorities for strengthening the capacity of HBCUs. These priorities include improving outreach and engagement with HBCUs and increasing the pipeline of talent through internships. DHS identified seminars, job fairs, training and technical assistance as means for achieving its priorities. However, DHS did not include a specific strategy or measurable goals for accountability.
- The DHS annual plan projected spending about \$755,000 of its \$70 billion operating budget in fiscal year 2018 on HBCU training and development efforts.⁴ Further, just one DHS component identified investments in cooperative agreement with HBCUs.⁵

¹ Executive Order 13779, Presidential Executive Order on The White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (February 28, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-executive-order-white-house-initiative-promote-excellence-innovation-historically-black-colleges-universities/>

² *Id.*

³ Department of Homeland Security, *Annual Plan on Executive Agency Actions to Strengthen the Capacity of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to compete for Federal and Private Sector Opportunities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018* (May 29, 2018).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

- DHS’s plan revealed that HBCU-targeted programs such as the United States Coast Guard’s College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (a scholarship program available to juniors and seniors in college) are not being fully-utilized. In fact, the U.S. Coast Guard reported a 63.82% decrease in applications submitted by HBCU students in fiscal year 2018 at the time of reporting.⁶ This is particularly troubling given the U.S. Coast Guard Academy’s historic diversity challenges, as reflected in there being just four people (2 percent) in the 2017 graduating class of 195 self-identifying as Black or African-American.⁷
- The “Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Homeland Security Partnerships Act,” sponsored by Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, seeks to strengthen partnerships between DHS and HBCUs and minority-serving institutions.
- Under this legislation, DHS would be required to issue a strategy with yearly goals for enhancing partnerships with HBCUs and minority-serving institutions. This legislation also requires DHS to monitor and report on implementation of the strategy thereby ensuring the Department’s progress in providing contracting, research and development, and career opportunities to HBCUs and minority-serving institutions.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Chris Soto, *U.S. Coast Guard Academy blindingly white* (June 9, 2017), <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-coast-guard-diversity-20170610-story.html>.