

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We know that you share our commitment to encouraging more minorities, including Hispanic college students, to enter the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Bringing this underrepresented population into these fields of tomorrow is critical for our country's competitiveness in a global economy, which is why we believe it is so important that your Administration move swiftly to implement the STEM Education grant program for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) at the National Science Foundation, as authorized by Congress in the America COMPETES Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-69).

The National Science Foundation, like other government agencies, has long recognized the value of targeted capacity-building programs at minority-serving institutions. While there may be other programs throughout federal agencies that have similar goals, the National Science Foundation programs have clearly filled an important niche in the training of minority students. There are currently in place programs for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges and Universities. The absence of a dedicated program for HSIs is notable – a situation we sought to correct in the America COMPETES Act.

In particular, we are concerned that the lack of a dedicated program for HSIs sends a negative message to the very students we need to reach. These students need to feel welcome in the science fields – particularly as the Hispanic population has been traditionally underrepresented, younger students may have difficulty seeing role models at the higher levels to inspire them. We appreciate the work the Administration has done to encourage and support educational achievement, such as through the White House Initiative for Educational Excellence for Hispanics. We believe a dedicated grant program at the National Science Foundation is the kind of concrete step needed to build upon these efforts and advance them further.

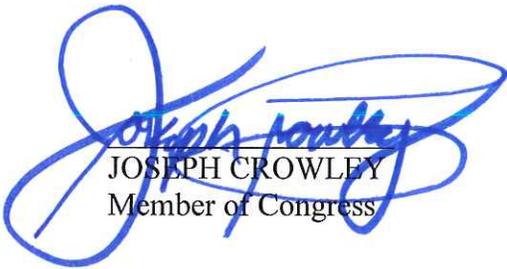
If we want to reach Hispanic students and entice them into a career in the science and technology fields, HSIs provide the infrastructure we need to build upon. Currently, well over half of all Hispanic students are enrolled at colleges and universities designated as HSIs. The majority of HSIs have Hispanic student populations well over the minimum threshold of 25 percent needed to receive this designation.

Furthermore, these institutions have the expertise in the needs of their student body, and as such are best equipped to build targeted STEM programs that will draw in Hispanic students. These reasons are what led Congress to recognize the role of HSIs in the America COMPETES Act by explicitly directing the National Science Foundation to establish a capacity building program for STEM education at HSIs.

Congress is due to soon act on the next reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act, and we intend to pursue the implementation of the Hispanic-Serving Institutions program as a priority. We hope that your Administration, including the National Science Foundation, will work with us and use this reauthorization to address any lingering concerns that are preventing this program from being established as Congress has made clear it expects to see done.

Together, we can help Hispanic students reach their rightful place in the STEM fields, and we firmly believe that the implementation of a dedicated grant program for HSIs at the National Science Foundation is a critical first step. We look forward to working with you to strengthen efforts to improve STEM education in our country.

Sincerely,



JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress



BEN RAY LUJÁN
Member of Congress



JOSE E. SERRANO
Member of Congress



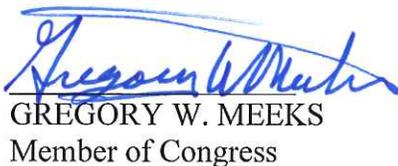
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Member of Congress



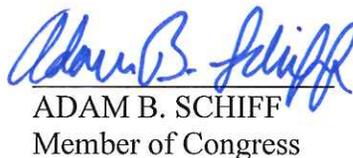
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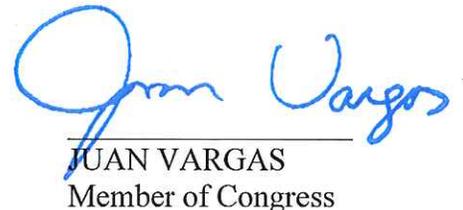
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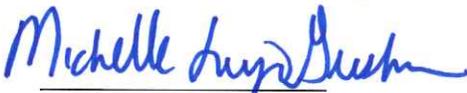

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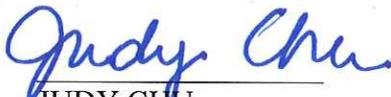

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