

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4496

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for additional uses of funds for grants to strengthen historically Black colleges and universities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 12, 2026

Ms. ALSOBROOKS (for herself and Mr. JUSTICE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for additional uses of funds for grants to strengthen historically Black colleges and universities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) According to a 2021 study by Americans for
6 the Arts, the arts are an invaluable aspect of Amer-
7 ican society, as they strengthen the economy, im-
8 prove healthcare, spark creativity and innovation,

1 and unify communities, with 73 percent of partici-
2 pants agreeing that the arts help them to better un-
3 derstand other cultures.

4 (2) Many United States museums are grappling
5 with diversity. Studies report that only 1.4 percent
6 of artists featured in America's top museums are
7 black, only 4 percent of staff directors at top muse-
8 ums are Black, and only 2.5 percent of Black Amer-
9 icans are owners of Arts-Entertainment business.

10 (3) Historically Black colleges and universities,
11 or HBCUs, are uniquely positioned to produce a di-
12 verse generation of art professionals and help bring
13 much needed attention to works by Black artists.
14 HBCUs have historically served as long-standing
15 conservators and crucial supporters of Black art and
16 for the teaching, supporting, and displaying of es-
17 sential Black artists who may otherwise have re-
18 mained unrecognized.

19 (4) Arts programs and arts departments are ex-
20 pensive and have often fallen victim to funding
21 shortfalls. In 2018, the College Art Association re-
22 ported that at least 18 institutions of higher edu-
23 cation planned to severely curtail or eliminate their
24 arts departments.

1 (5) HBCUs have also been underfunded by
 2 \$12,600,000,000 compared to their predominantly
 3 White counterparts over the last 30 years. Some
 4 HBCUs have shrunk, consolidated, or cut their arts
 5 programs due to limited resources.

6 (6) An increased investment in HBCU arts,
 7 arts education, and culture programs can further
 8 help students of color access an affordable arts edu-
 9 cation and ensure the continued preparation, con-
 10 servation, display, and study of works by Black art-
 11 ists.

12 **SEC. 2. STRENGTHENING HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES**
 13 **AND UNIVERSITIES.**

14 Section 323 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
 15 U.S.C. 1062) is amended—

16 (1) in subsection (a)—

17 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (14) and
 18 (15) as paragraphs (19) and (20), respectively;
 19 and

20 (B) by inserting after paragraph (13) the
 21 following:

22 “(14) Providing financial and other assistance
 23 to students in arts, arts education, and cultural pro-
 24 grams.

1 “(15) Establishing outreach programs and de-
2 velopment offices for arts, arts education, and cul-
3 tural departments.

4 “(16) Providing comprehensive wraparound
5 services for arts, arts education, and cultural stu-
6 dents, including faculty and peer mentorship, work-
7 based learning opportunities, guidance counseling,
8 and career advising.

9 “(17) Exhibiting, maintaining, monitoring, and
10 protecting Black art collections in exhibition and in
11 storage.

12 “(18) Providing well-paid apprenticeship, in-
13 ternship, and fellowship opportunities to students in
14 arts, arts education, and cultural programs through
15 partnerships with nonprofit arts, arts education, and
16 cultural institutes.”; and

17 (2) by adding at the end the following:

18 “(d) NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS.—An
19 institution may enter into a partnership with the National
20 Endowment for the Arts to carry out the activities de-
21 scribed in paragraphs (14) through (18) of subsection (a).

22 “(e) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ‘arts’
23 means art forms used for self-expression and interpreta-

- 1 tion, including performance, literary, visual, graphic, plas-
- 2 tic, and decorative arts.”.

