

2022 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 147

BY REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES

A RESOLUTION

To recognize Tuesday, May 24, 2022, as Historically Black Colleges and Universities Day at the state capitol.

WHEREAS, Louisiana is proud to be home to eight Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Dillard University, Grambling State University, Southern University and A&M College, Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Southern University Law Center, Southern University at New Orleans, Southern University at Shreveport, and Xavier University; and

WHEREAS, the fact that Louisiana is home to the nation's only HBCU system, the Southern University System, uniquely positions the state as an exemplar of successful HBCU policy and practice; and

WHEREAS, it would be remiss not to recognize the contributions to Louisiana's HBCUs made by two notable leaders, both of whom are on the verge of retirement; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Ray Belton will retire after giving more than thirty-five years of service to Southern University, including service as chancellor of Southern University at Shreveport for fourteen years and as president-chancellor of the Southern University System and Southern University and A&M College for seven years; and

WHEREAS, over the course of the last four years, and under the tenure of Dr. Belton, both retention and graduation rates have grown at Southern University and A&M College, and the enrollment of first-time freshman has increased by an average of 15% per year, while resources to support campus enhancements have expanded by 220%; and

WHEREAS, under Dr. Belton's leadership, Southern University and A&M College was recently designated as a Carnegie R2 institution "with high research activity", which is the second-highest classification for American research universities; and

WHEREAS, similarly, Dr. Walter Kimbrough will retire on May 31 as president of Dillard University after ten years of service at the school; Dr. Kimbrough also led Philander Smith College as president for nearly eight years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Kimbrough is known internationally on social media as the legendary "hip hop prez", where he uses his expertise to expound on the value of HBCUs; and

WHEREAS, Dillard University's endowment now stands at \$105 million, having grown by more than 115% during Dr. Kimbrough's tenure, thus making the 152-year old institution one of the best-funded HBCU endowments in the nation; and

WHEREAS, under Dr. Kimbrough's leadership, Dillard University's academic profile has increased with the introduction of two signature programs, physics and film studies, as well as the restructuring of its nursing school into the college of nursing; and

WHEREAS, during Dr. Kimbrough's tenure, Dillard University has also seen increases in its retention and graduation rates; and

WHEREAS, in 2020-2021, Louisiana HBCU's collectively enrolled 21,168 students; and

WHEREAS, since their establishment 186 years ago, HBCUs have provided Black students with a powerful avenue, and for some, the only available path to a college degree; and

WHEREAS, as Louisiana has grappled with both the global COVID-19 pandemic and historic national civil unrest, HBCUs have proven to be invaluable assets based on their history, student experiences, and societal contributions; and

WHEREAS, higher education universally provides wide-ranging benefits to students, including higher average lifetime wages, better career opportunities, increased job security and satisfaction, and better health, and exerts a considerable economic impact on communities, the state, and the region; and

WHEREAS, HBCUs enroll and successfully graduate greater numbers of low-income, first-generation, and academically underprepared college students compared with non-HBCUs; and

WHEREAS, evidence demonstrates that high levels of student-faculty engagement and mentorship at HBCUs lead to stronger student success; and

WHEREAS, HBCUs are credited with building the Black middle class in America, and Black graduates of HBCUs are significantly more likely to be better off financially and socially; and

WHEREAS, research has found that, on average, 58% of Black HBCU graduates strongly agree that professors at their university cared about them as individuals, as compared to 25% for Black non-HBCU graduates; and

WHEREAS, Black HBCU graduates are nearly twice as likely as Black graduates of non-HBCUs to strongly agree that their university prepared them for life outside of college; and

WHEREAS, the pageantry, traditions, bands, and collegiate rivalries of HBCUs are second to none; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's HBCUs have distinguished themselves nationally and in the state of Louisiana in numerous ways such as:

(1) Dillard University is one of the nation's leading producers of Black physicists.

(2) Grambling State University is the leading producer of computer science graduates in the state of Louisiana and the only institution to offer bachelor's degree programs in cybersecurity and cloud computing.

(3) Southern University in Baton Rouge is a leading producer of Black engineers in Louisiana, and its graduates play significant roles at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Boeing, International Business Machines, Entergy, and Dow Chemical, among other leading companies; and

(4) Southern University at New Orleans is the only HBCU to offer a forensic science program.

(5) Southern University at Shreveport is the only two-year community college in North Louisiana with an aerospace technology program.

(6) Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center is the first HBCU to launch its own CBC and THC medical marijuana lines.

(7) Southern University Law Center counts among its alumni 104 attorneys who are currently serving as judges.

(8) Xavier University has been nationally recognized by the Association of American Medical Colleges for the number of Black graduates that go on to successfully

complete medical school and currently plans to open its own medical school and graduate school of health sciences, all of which would make Xavier the fifth Black medical school in the nation; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate for the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana to commend the state's eight HBCUs for their outstanding contributions to local communities, the state, and the world.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby recognize Tuesday, May 24, 2022, as Historically Black Colleges and Universities Day at the state capitol and does hereby acknowledge the invaluable contributions these institutions have made to the state of Louisiana.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES