



Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

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**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Reform**

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To Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Subcommittee Chairman Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member James Comer and Congressman Byron Donalds, thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony for today's hearing: "HBCUs at Risk: Examining Federal Support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities."

Thank you for hearing the perspective of a student at Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) and the perspectives of other HBCU representatives. While our modern-day perspectives are essential, I would also like to emphasize that racial violence towards HBCUs is a multi-generational occurrence that profoundly impacts the Black community. My family and I are living examples of this multi-generational trauma as two of my cousins have lived experiences of the 1999 pipe bombs that took place at FAMU while they were students from 1998 until 2001 and 2002, respectively.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been a longstanding symbol of support and a path towards success for Black communities across our nation for generations and will continue to provide this for generations to come. However, bomb threats towards the Black community are unfortunately an experience that has shown its face as if it were a generational tradition. Many generations can recount their own experiences of bomb threats and bombs being dropped or detonated on their communities. Despite these foul yet all too common occurrences of racism traditionally taking place in the United States, HBCUs provided a path towards success in pursuing the American dream for Black Americans that each and every American longs for.

As a son and grandson of immigrants, I had no clue what opportunities lay ahead of me before I began college. However, if it were not for an HBCU like FAMU, I know for certain that I would not be who I am today. Although I am the first in my immediate family to attend and graduate college as I will cross the stage wearing a cap and gown on April 29, 2022, I have two extended family members who attended FAMU during the pipe bombings in 1999. My cousins, William Sainvil and Wadson Sainvil were both Criminal Justice Scholars during the bombings. William served ten years under the Broward Sheriff's Office immediately following his graduation in 2001. Wadson still serves today in his 19th year on the force as a Police Sergeant under the

Hollywood Police Department in Hollywood, Florida. William and Wadson Sainvil are examples of HBCU excellence. They both graduated with honors and served their community to make the lives around them better through law enforcement despite facing racial violence in the form of pipe bombs detonated during their time at FAMU.

My cousins, who are children of immigrants like I am, never expected to endure pipe bombs on their campus planted by a racist who did not want Black people to engage in higher education. Instead, they expected to excel on a campus meant for academic excellence and to chase their aspirations of becoming educated and well-rounded Americans. More than 20 years later, my cousins also did not expect their younger cousin to attend the same illustrious university while HBCUs across the nation, including fellow Florida HBCUs Florida Memorial University, Bethune-Cookman University, and Edward Waters University, were experiencing their own round of bomb threats. I, too, now have anxiety about the safety of my three goddaughters, my younger siblings, and my future children as they enroll in HBCUs once their time comes to earn a formal education.

William Sainvil, Wadson Sainvil, and I are all products of success that Historically Black Colleges and Universities produce at every graduation ceremony. HBCUs should continue to be federally supported and protected as we endeavor to remove this ongoing tradition of bombing and bomb threats for HBCU students of the future. Racism has impacted minorities for generations, but institutions like Florida A&M University, and those of my fellow panelists at Howard University and Xavier University, and many more are all ready and willing to propel minorities like us into our nation so we can make the change that we wish to see.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and provide the perspective of an HBCU student on this important topic.