July 2, 2020

The Honorable Catherine Cortez-Masto
United State Senate
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Amodei
104 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
144 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susie Lee
522 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dina Titus
2464 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steven Horsford
1330 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 3827 - Request for Congressional Support of the “Hispanic Educational Resources and Empowerment Act of 2019” (HERE Act or H.R. 3827)

Dear Members of Congress:

On September 14, 2018, the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and its eight institutions, wrote to U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez-Masto in support of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities’ (HACU) legislative proposal to create a new part under Title V of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Since then, on July 18, 2019, Rep. Joaquin Castro (TX-20) introduced the “Hispanic Educational Resources and Empowerment Act of 2019” (HERE Act or H.R. 3827). The HERE Act would improve collaboration between Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and Hispanic-serving school districts to improve postsecondary educational attainment of Hispanic students. This includes those institutions and school districts that are considered “emerging,” which includes most of our state’s institutions and school districts. The bill has 43 original co-sponsors. It was last referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor (HELP) for debate but the bill has not made it out of committee yet. The legislation was intended to be introduced as an amendment to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Today, in partnership with the Clark County School District (CCSD), and on behalf of Superintendent Jesus Jara and our eight institutional presidents, we are writing to request your support of H.R. 3827. Specifically, we are asking our federal delegation to either introduce the Senate version of the HERE Act or to consider co-sponsoring the current House bill.
As you are aware, Hispanics comprise 46 percent of the CCSD student population and CCSD educates 75 percent of the students in our state. Of the eight NSHE institutions, five institutions are federally designated HSIs, having a Hispanic student population that exceeds 25 percent (CSN: 34%; NSC: 37%; TMCC: 32%; UNLV: 31%; WNC: 28%) and two institutions are federally designated as emerging HSIs, having a Hispanic student population that ranges from 15 to 25 percent (UNR: 22%; GBC: 23%). CSN became the first institution in the state to be a federally designated HSI and Nevada State College became the first institution in the state to receive federal funding under Title V of the Higher Education Act. The HSI work of these institutions is supported by an NSHE system-wide HSI Taskforce that was formed in 2014 to leverage institutional networks and promote federal funding opportunities.

Yet, as H.R. 3827 finds, Hispanic students are overrepresented in lower educational outcomes and face greater barriers once they are in college than their non-Hispanic peers. They are at high risk of not enrolling or graduating from institutions of higher education. It is critical to increase the educational attainment of Hispanic students given they will make up nearly 20 percent of the United States labor force by 2024.

A new grant program would allow our institutions and CCSD to expand our dual enrollment programs to target more low-income and minority students. Furthermore, H.R. 3827 allows for partnerships with one or more nonprofit or community-based organizations, businesses, or public or private entities with a demonstrated record of success in implementing activities similar to those authorized under H.R. 3827. This would give us the flexibility and leeway to create a college-bound culture, provide academic support to prepare eligible students for postsecondary education, prevent the need for postsecondary remediation, and provide high quality postsecondary remediation when necessary. Furthermore, H.R. 3827 would allow us to support high school graduates to transition to postsecondary education and address the non-academic needs that serve as barriers to college enrollment, persistence, and completion of students.

On April 22, 2020, various members of our higher education institutions met with your office during the HACU Capitol Forum to discuss HSI funding and the importance of H.R. 3827. Since then, Rep. Dina Titus (NV-01) has agreed to become the first member of our Nevada delegation to co-sponsor H.R. 3827. We urge the rest of our House of Representatives to consider co-sponsoring the bill and our U.S. Senators to consider introducing the Senate version of the bill either as an amendment to another federal piece of legislation or as a stand-alone bill.

On behalf of our NSHE institutions and CCSD, we thank you for your leadership and consideration in support of H.R. 3827. We stand ready to support your efforts in helping us address the achievement gaps between white and Hispanic students. We welcome the opportunity to speak with you and provide additional support for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Dr. Thom Reilly, Chancellor  
Nevada System of Higher Education

Dr. Jesus F. Jara, Superintendent  
Clark County School District
Dr. Federico Zaragoza, President
College of Southern Nevada

Mr. Bart Patterson, President
Nevada State College

Dr. Marta Meana, Acting President
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dr. Marc Johnson, President
University of Nevada, Reno

Dr. Joyce Helens, President
Great Basin College

Dr. Karin Hilgersom, President
Truckee Meadows Community College

Dr. Vincent Solis, President
Western Nevada College

Dr. Kumud Acharya, President
Desert Research Institute