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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 360

Offered January 23, 1995

Expressing the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia that historically black institutions of higher education be preserved.

Patrons—Lucas, Houck, Lambert, Marsh, Maxwell, Miller, Y.B. and Saslaw; Delegates: Bennett, Christian, Cunningham, Deeds, Jones, D.C., Jones, J.C., Melvin, Robinson and Spruill

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, although African Americans have realized some improvement in their college participation rate since 1985, white students are much more likely to be enrolled in college than African Americans; and

WHEREAS, African Americans in significant numbers, due to limitations on family finances and inequities in elementary and secondary preparation and opportunities, frequently do not pursue postsecondary education degrees; and

WHEREAS, African Americans received less than six percent of all baccalaureate degrees and less than five percent of all first-time professional degrees awarded in 1990; and

WHEREAS, there are compelling reasons for the under representation of African Americans in higher education, including the disproportionate representation of African American families among all families below the federal poverty line, gaps in information about college opportunities and student financial assistance among secondary school age African American students, and the excessive numbers of African American males between the ages of 18-24 in prison, on parole or on probation; and

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators has indicated that increasing African American participation in higher education can be achieved by developing and enhancing state programs that provide funding, scholarships, and grants to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs); and

WHEREAS, the value and importance of the historical mission of HBCUs fostered positive learning environments that nurtured the abilities, gifts, and talents of African Americans in pursuit of higher education; and

WHEREAS, the HBCUs have contributed significantly to all Americans by educating some of the world's most brilliant and talented artists, scientists, physicians, attorneys, corporate leaders, educators, statesmen, and other professionals; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of directions from the U. S. Supreme Court, relative to the application of the court's Fordice decision, many persons have voiced opposition to the interpretation of the federal lower court decision in Ayers vs. Fordice, a Mississippi case, that supports the elimination, downsizing or consolidation of HBCUs; and

WHEREAS, legal or legislative initiatives that would eliminate, downsize, or consolidate HBCUs would provide a significant obstacle to participation of African Americans in higher education, limiting a vital human resource and hindering future economic growth of the state and the country; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That any court decision, legislative initiative, or policy which would support the elimination, downsizing, or consolidation of HBCUs should be opposed, and that efforts should be undertaken to ensure the viability and preservation of these institutions; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Governor, the Secretary of Education, the Attorney General of Virginia, members of the Virginia congressional delegation, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and the Association of College Presidents and Deans so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly in this matter.

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