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LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson Testifies Before Congress on the Continuing Threat of Racialized Violence and Targeting of Black Institutions

Today, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson testified before the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security in response to the ongoing crisis of extremist attacks on Black institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

In her remarks to the Committee, Nelson noted: “The bombs threats made to HBCUs are evidenced of increased white extremist violence across the country. The threats have prompted colleges and universities to temporarily cancel in-person classes, lock down buildings, and order students and faculty to shelter in place – as if in a war zone – to ensure their own safety. This constant and persistent threat of violence continues to loom large on HBCU campuses and in the psyches of students who continue to endure the effects of a pandemic.

“Despite these threats of terror, HBCUs have remained resilient in their mission, and Black religious organizations continue to serve as a central institution in Black communities across the nation. But the continuing threat of racialized violence and the targeting of Black institutions is a scenario no student, faculty or staff member, religious leader, devotee or institution should have to endure in 2022. We call on Congress to bring the full power and resources of the federal government to protect these hallowed institutions that strengthen and enrich our society and to ensure the safety and security of every resident of this country, regardless of race or ethnicity, especially those who are targets of domestic racial terror.”

In her written testimony, Nelson underscored how the specter of white supremacist violence continues to loom and impact the safety and education of Black students. Nelson also highlighted the breadth, depth, and impact of these unconscionable attacks on Black institutions and the urgency of this moment.

“Recently, both chambers of Congress passed Resolutions condemning the string of bomb threats made to HBCUs,” Nelson wrote. “However, more must be done to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and administrators at HBCUs. The egregious nature of these crimes,

their scope and scale, and the racist motivations behind them deserve specific and immediate attention.”

Nelson continued: “In addition to ensuring that the FBI completes a thorough investigation of these attacks, this Committee must conduct a parallel investigation to ascertain the specific underlying animus, determine how to prevent future occurrences, and issue findings and solutions to prevent this ongoing threat. Congress must also ensure HBCUs have the funding necessary to protect themselves from these attacks.

“Finally, Congress should pass H.R. 6825 the Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act, which would expand and strengthen the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (“NSGP”). The NSGP Improvement Act would increase funding to \$500,000,000 for each fiscal year 2023 through 2028. It would also establish an office within the Federal Emergency Management Agency to exclusively handle grant requests, process applications, and provide outreach, engagement, and public education support.”

Read Janai Nelson’s full written testimony [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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