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June 21, 2017

The Honorable Donald Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear President Trump,

As Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, I write today to acknowledge receipt of your staff's communication inviting the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) to meet with you. In written communication dating back to January 2017, we have shared the priorities of the Caucus as they relate to the Black community. We are serious about the work of advancing the interests of our people and the goals of the CBC. As a result, we took advantage of every opportunity to educate you on the needs of the Black community and provide you with the information and solutions necessary to act on them in good faith. Through an objective assessment, we have seen no evidence that your Administration acted on our calls for action, and we have in fact witnessed steps that will affirmatively hurt Black communities. While we agreed to explore possible future discussions when we first met, it has become abundantly clear that a conversation with the entire CBC would not be entirely productive, given the actions taken by your Administration since our first meeting. While you can solicit the engagement of individual members of our caucus, the CBC as a caucus declines your invitation to meet at this time.

As you are well aware, when the leadership of the CBC met with you on March 22, 2017, we presented you with a 130-page policy document because we recognized the opportunity to educate both you and your Administration on the difficult history of Black people in this country, the history of the CBC, and solutions to advance Black families in the 21st Century. Your Administration has yet to provide a response to the policies we presented. Additionally, your Administration has not followed through on a pledge you made to us to facilitate meetings with relevant Cabinet officials.

In fact, based on the actions taken by you and your Administration since that meeting, it appears that our concerns, and your stated receptiveness to them, fell on deaf ears. Your fiscal year 2018 budget request would not only devastate

the communities we represent, but also many of the communities that supported your candidacy. Three-fifths of the cuts you propose draw much-needed funds from programs that serve low- and moderate-income people, the most vulnerable Americans among us. For example, you propose a \$4 billion cut to Pell Grants that help low-income college students pay their tuition. You also proposed the complete elimination of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which helps seniors and other helpless populations heat their homes in the winter and cool them in the summer. These are just a few of the many examples of how your budget would destroy minority communities, all while your Administration and Congressional Republicans consider proposals to provide tax cuts for the richest Americans.

Moreover, your Administration has taken actions that cause legitimate alarm among members of this caucus and the millions of Americans we represent. In a two-page document, your Attorney General issued guidance to federal prosecutors to accelerate the failed war on drugs that will continue to wreck the Black community and exacerbate our nation's shameful scourge of mass incarceration. Attorney General Sessions has also explicitly stated his unwillingness to utilize consent decrees to protect the civil rights of Americans and has called for an agency-wide review of these agreements. These shortsighted decisions represent willful ignorance by relying on ideology instead of data and compassion. Every dollar we spend on incarceration renders our communities less safe.

Additionally, under your Education Secretary's leadership, a number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities have lost critical funding through the TRIO programs, which specifically target resources to low-income and first generation college students. Secretary DeVos has also refused to protect children from being discriminated against, and terminated an Obama Administration program focused on improving school diversity and student achievement in the lowest-performing schools across this country. On top of this, you affixed a signing statement to the most recent funding bill calling into question the constitutionality of funding for certain HBCU programming, an action that we immediately objected to.

These aforementioned policies alone will devastate Black communities, not to mention your effort to dismantle our nation's health care system. The Affordable Care Act has helped lower the uninsured rate for nonelderly African Americans by more than one-third between 2013 and 2016, from 18.9 percent to 11.7 percent. The House bill that you celebrated in the Rose Garden would strip millions of black people of their health care, reversing the gains brought on by the Affordable Care Act and endangering young and old alike. The bill that you celebrated, but subsequently called "mean," would cut federal Medicaid funding by \$834 billion, ensuring that states would cut benefits due to inability to make up the difference. Black people make up 13.3 percent of the U.S. population but 19 percent of Medicaid enrollees and would be dealt a painful blow by this mean-spirited legislation.

We have voiced all of these concerns in various forms, most of them in writing, but have heard nothing from you or your Cabinet officials. To date, you and your Administration have failed to respond to any of the following correspondence from the CBC:

- January 19, 2017: Letter to you in response to your "New Deal for Black America," which included dozens of viable policy solutions.
- March 22, 2017: 130-page policy document entitled, "We have a Lot to Lose"
- March 22, 2017: Letter to Attorney General Sessions from CBC Chairman Richmond and Judiciary Ranking Member Conyers.
- March 22, 2017: Letter to Secretary DeVos from CBC Chairman Richmond and Education and Workforce Ranking Member Scott.
- April 4, 2017: Letter to you regarding your efforts to sabotage our nation's health care system

- April 5, 2017: Letter to Attorney General Sessions regarding his review of Department of Justice policies, including consent decrees.
- April 25, 2017: Letter to you regarding the status of the crisis in Flint, Michigan
- June 7, 2017: Letter to Attorney General Sessions, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kelly, and Acting FBI Director McCabe regarding hate crimes.

Given the lack of response to any of the many concerns we have raised with you and your Administration, we decline your invitation for all 49 members of the Congressional Black Caucus to meet with you. The CBC, and the millions of people we represent, have a lot to lose under your Administration. I fail to see how a social gathering would benefit the policies we advocate for. The CBC will always be willing to engage in discussion and debate about policies and programs that will make America a more perfect union for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Richmond', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Cedric L. Richmond
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus