



Tyisha Walker-Myers
President
New Haven Board of Alders

April 21, 2026

Dear Community Members, Educators, and Advocates,

I am writing to you today with a profound sense of urgency and hope regarding the City of New Haven's request for state planning funds to explore the potential establishment of an Historical Black College and University (HBCU) in New Haven, Connecticut. As the Founding Principal of the Booker T. Washington Academy and the current CEO of Elevate Charter Schools, I have dedicated my life to empowering our young people, particularly those from underserved communities. It is my firm belief that creating an HBCU in our city would be a transformative step towards providing our students with the educational opportunities they truly deserve.

Every family deserves robust choice options where students can explore academic fields, cultivate leadership skills, and foster a deep connection to their heritage. An HBCU would not only serve as a beacon of hope for our community but would also provide a unique curriculum that celebrates the rich history, culture, and contributions of African Americans. It would serve families invested in a future where their children can thrive academically—and not just survive amid systemic barriers.

Historically, HBCUs have played a crucial role in the education of African Americans since the post-Civil War era, providing a nurturing space when access to quality higher education was often denied. The legacy of these institutions speaks to resilience, empowerment, and the belief that education is a fundamental right for all.

Yet, as we honor this legacy, we must also confront the missed opportunities of our past. After the Civil War, there was an opportunity for New Haven to establish its own HBCU, a college that could have become a cornerstone of education and community empowerment. However, we allowed this moment to slip away, causing our city to miss an essential resource that could have uplifted generations of students of color.

Today, we stand at a crossroads. With the backdrop of growing social justice movements, it is time for New Haven to rectify this historical oversight. Establishing an HBCU in our city would not only be a step toward justice but an investment in our communal future, creating pathways to success that will resonate in our communities for years to come.

For families with students enrolled at Booker T. Washington Academy and similar schools, an HBCU offers the promise of continuity in education. The establishment of an HBCU would allow our children to transition seamlessly from K-12 education into a supportive higher education environment, nurturing their academic and personal growth. The access to mentorship, relevant curricula, and a sense of belonging could change the trajectory of their lives.

Additionally, HBCUs frequently offer scholarships and financial aid tailored to the needs of underrepresented students, alleviating the burdens of student debt that many families face. For our communities, this would mean a reduction in economic disparities while fostering a generation of skilled leaders prepared to effect change.

As I conclude this letter, I invite our community—educators, parents, city leaders, and concerned citizens—to join in advocating for the establishment of an HBCU in New Haven. Let us come together to harness our collective power and ensure that our youth have access to the educational opportunities that might otherwise be denied.

Together, we can transform this vision into reality, creating a legacy of empowerment, educational equity, and a brighter future for generations to come. Now is the time for action. Let us challenge ourselves to not only dream of an HBCU but to work tirelessly until it stands proudly in our city.

In unity and hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Taylor" clearly distinguishable.

John Taylor
Founding Principal, Booker T. Washington Academy
CEO, Elevate Charter Schools