



101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Suite 600 West, Washington, DC 20001

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California State University –
13 Member Schools
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City College
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Indiana University-Purdue
University Indianapolis
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North Carolina State University
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Portland State University
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Tennessee State University
University of Akron
University of Alabama -
Birmingham
University of Central Florida
University of Cincinnati
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University of Memphis
University of Minnesota
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Kansas City
University of New Mexico
University of New Orleans
Virginia Commonwealth
University
Wichita State University

December 3, 2008

President-elect Barack Obama
Obama for America
P.O. Box 8102
Chicago, IL 60680

Dear Mr. President-elect:

The Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU), representing a nationwide network of public urban research universities, extends to you our sincere congratulations upon your historic election to the presidency of the United States of America. We applaud your commitment and dedication to improving urban communities as demonstrated through your many proposals, including your effort to create a White House Office of Urban Policy to develop a strategy for metropolitan America.

University presidents created USU to leverage the intellectual capital and economic power of urban universities, thereby improving urban life and America's competitiveness in the global economy. To this end, USU is focused on three major issues -- creating a competitive workforce, building strong communities, and improving the health of a diverse population.

While we face many challenges, none is more urgent than the economic recovery of our nation. It is clear that any successful and sustainable recovery must involve investing in our urban communities, and specifically, our public urban research universities. These universities are economic drivers and create the jobs, growth, and revenues on which urban areas and our country depend.

As anchors for our nation's cities, public urban research universities are also uniquely positioned and prepared to play a constructive role in working to address the critical talent issues our nation currently faces. Collectively, we are responsible for training a large portion of the nation's urban health professionals, and are focused on strategies that will expand, diversify, and better prepare our future health workforce as a step toward eliminating health disparities. Our universities are an essential part of the education pipeline, enrolling large numbers of students from local school districts and specifically training them to be educators in urban areas.

For example, USU is piloting a nation wide-adaptation of a "birth through career" community initiative from Cincinnati in five additional major U.S. cities. Using the convening power of urban university presidents, the project

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seeks to create P-20 access and success partnerships amongst community stakeholders to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for college and successful careers. Living Cities Inc., which is supporting funding for the project, believes USU has an extraordinary model. Increasingly, local and national foundations are investing in the power of anchor urban universities, not only in enhancing the education pipeline, but also in neighborhood renewal, economic development, and the preparation of health care professionals. We welcome an opportunity to share our work in replicating our model programs with you.

In the coming year, USU will undertake an aggressive legislative agenda, which is attached. You will note our federal agenda complements priorities for your new administration, such as teacher residency, national service and economic clusters. This agenda reflects USU's mission that calls upon public urban research universities to escalate urban university engagement and to do so with the clarity of purpose that has characterized large-scale efforts within higher education in the past. The cornerstone of this agenda will be pursuing enactment of a comprehensive legislative package, "The Urban University Renaissance Act of the 21st Century", which encompasses many of USU's priorities.

Again, USU greatly appreciates your vision and leadership in urban and metropolitan issues. We look forward to working with you, by offering our policy ideas and access to our many experts, in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy L. Zimpher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "Z".

Nancy L. Zimpher
Chair, Coalition of Urban Serving Universities
President, University of Cincinnati

Attachment

Cc: Valerie Jarrett, Co-Chair of the Obama-Biden Transition Project
Phil Schiliro, Director of Congressional Relations
Michael Strautmanis, Director of Public Liaison and Intergovernmental Affairs