

**Remarks for Dr. Brenda A. Allen
President, Lincoln University
Pennsylvania Senate Education Committee Hearing
October 20, 2026**

Good morning, Chair Lynda Schlegel Culver, Vice Chair Tracy Pennycuick, Minority Chair Lindsey M. Williams, Senator Carolyn Comitta, distinguished members of the Senate Education Committee, and fellow panelists.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the proposal authorizing Pennsylvania institutions of higher education to offer a modified bachelor's degree requiring no fewer than 90 credit hours.

I am Dr. Brenda A. Allen, President of Lincoln University, the nation's first degree-granting Historically Black College and University. On behalf of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and Board of Trustees, thank you for inviting Lincoln University to contribute to this important conversation. Lincoln University appreciates the Committee's willingness to engage institutions across the Commonwealth as you

consider policy changes that may shape the future of higher education.

Like many institutions across Pennsylvania, Lincoln University recognizes the financial challenges facing today's students and families. We support efforts that reduce barriers to higher education, increase degree completion, and create meaningful pathways to economic mobility. These are priorities we share with the General Assembly and with our higher education partners throughout Pennsylvania.

At the same time, we believe any modification to bachelor's degree requirements should be approached thoughtfully and with careful consideration of educational quality and student success.

After extensive discussions among faculty, academic leaders, student success professionals, and administrators, Lincoln University concluded that a broadly applied 90-

credit bachelor's degree would not align with our traditional undergraduate educational model. Our bachelor's degree programs currently require **128 credit hours**, reflecting a deliberate commitment to academic rigor and a comprehensive liberal arts education.

Those credits represent much more than classroom instruction. They support the development of critical thinking, communication skills, leadership capacity, ethical reasoning, civic responsibility, and global awareness. They also provide opportunities for internships, undergraduate research, experiential learning, leadership development, and other high-impact educational experiences that prepare students for graduate study, professional careers, and lifelong success.

Our faculty expressed concern that reducing degree requirements by nearly one-third could limit these experiences and potentially diminish the transformational

educational environment that has long distinguished a Lincoln University education. Particular concern was expressed regarding first-generation students, Pell-eligible students, and those who benefit from the mentoring, support services, and developmental opportunities embedded within a traditional undergraduate experience.

However, our review also identified potential opportunities for carefully targeted implementation.

Lincoln University's School of Adult and Continuing Education serves adult learners, degree completers, military-affiliated students, and working professionals. For these populations, a modified degree pathway may offer additional flexibility and help address workforce needs while maintaining rigorous academic standards and meaningful learning outcomes.

Should the Commonwealth move forward with this legislation, Lincoln University respectfully recommends several safeguards:

First, participation should remain entirely voluntary, allowing each institution to determine whether such programs align with its mission and student population.

Second, faculty governance must remain central to curriculum decisions, academic standards, and learning outcomes.

Third, students must receive clear information regarding transferability, graduate and professional school admission requirements, licensure implications, and financial aid considerations.

Finally, any modified degree program should remain subject to accreditation requirements and demonstrate educational quality equivalent to traditional pathways.

In closing, Lincoln University does not support broad implementation of a 90-credit bachelor's degree within our traditional 128-credit undergraduate programs. However, we recognize that carefully designed, mission-appropriate applications may provide value for adult learners, degree completers, and workforce-focused populations when accompanied by strong institutional safeguards and student protections.

We appreciate the Committee's thoughtful consideration of this issue and thank you for seeking input from institutions across Pennsylvania. Lincoln University stands ready to work with members of the General Assembly, higher education leaders, and accrediting bodies to advance solutions that improve access and affordability while preserving the rigor, integrity, and transformational value of a bachelor's degree.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome your questions.