



Black Alliance for Educational Options

MORE THAN 12,000 COMMUNITY MEMBERS EMPOWERED BY THE BLACK ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS AND DR. MARVIN L. SAPP DURING A SIX-CITY EDUCATIONAL TOUR

February 11, 2013 - WASHINGTON, DC — The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) joined Grand Rapids, Michigan pastor and Grammy nominated, Dove, Stellar and BET award-winning gospel artist Dr. Marvin L. Sapp for six spirit-filled events in cities across the southeastern United States from January 30 – February 6. Entitled *“An Evening with Dr. Marvin L. Sapp,”* BAEO and Dr. Sapp worked together to educate members in filled-to-capacity churches about the importance of parent choice and educational options especially in the Black community. With as many as 3,300 people in one venue, the tour was touted as an amazing success with many communities being informed, inspired, and empowered to take action about the lack of educational choices in their communities.

“This tour was about educating and later, mobilizing parents, to know more and do more to ensure that they have high-quality educational options available to them in their communities,” said BAEO President Kenneth Campbell. “Pastor Sapp is the operator of a charter school in Michigan, and he fully understands how important choice is especially in the Black community. He is well aware that not having options can be a matter of success and failure for far too many of our children.”

The group hosted events in: Louisville, Kentucky; Jackson, Mississippi; Memphis Tennessee; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Mobile, Alabama and, Birmingham, Alabama.

Dr. Sapp opened Grand Rapids Ellington Academy of Arts and Technology (GREAT) Charter School in September 2012 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. GREAT serves at the first public arts-integrated middle/high school performing arts academy in the West Michigan Area offering courses in instrumental music, vocal music, dance, graphic arts and theatre arts.

“It has been a phenomenal experience partnering with BAEO as we traveled all across the Southeast United States bringing in parents from all walks of life and teaching them about parent choice,” said Sapp. “We made a major impact during this tour.”

Dr. Sapp shared moments from his life that led to his decision to open a charter school and how critical it is for parents to understand the value of parental choice in helping to increase achievement for Black students.

Dr. Howard L. Fuller, BAEO Board of Chair, joined the tour in Jackson, Mississippi and Birmingham, Alabama as a keynote speaker. “An educational change is coming in the South, and BAEO wants to ensure that our communities are well-informed about impending legislation and what they can do to assist. It’s time they are informed, inspired and empowered to take a stand on this important issue.”

Phone2Action, a social advocacy platform that streamlines communication between constituents and legislators by allowing people to immediately contact their elected officials from their mobile devices, joined the tour as well with one mission in mind – for attendees to make their voices and concerns heard by their elected officials by texting the word “CHOICE” to 52886. By doing so, the constituents sent more than 20,000 emails to elected officials by the conclusion of the tour.

“Phone2Action amplifies people’s voices to effect change. We were honored to partner with BAEO and Marvin Sapp for the school choice tour, and we were inspired by the unmatched energy of the attendees,” said Jeb Ory, Co-Founder of Phone2Action. “We commend BAEO and Marvin Sapp for organizing such empowering events for communities.”

“BAEO is excited about the outcomes that we are seeing from the tour with more people wanting to be involved in this change movement. And while this tour was phenomenal, we know that there is more work to be done,” said Campbell. “We look forward to continuing to engage communities in our mobilization efforts in areas where we do our work.”

BAEO currently has state offices in Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Ohio and chapters in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

“Significant transformation is happening now in the education reform arena, and our communities must be well-represented if our children are to reap the benefits and be prepared to enjoy the freedoms of this country. You can only do that if you have a good, high-quality education.

Our work is not yet over,” said Fuller.

About BAEO

BAEO is a national, non-profit, membership organization. Its mission is to increase access to high-quality educational options for Black children by actively supporting parental choice policies and programs that empower low-income and working-class Black families.