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Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) Says Department of Education Data Support Continuing Struggle Against Unequal Educational Opportunity

EMBARGOED

FOR RELEASE:

1 P.M., EST, AUGUST 24, 2000

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A new national coalition of Black community leaders today launched a campaign against unequal educational opportunities for low-income American parents.

"Parental school choice and satisfaction in America is widespread — unless you're poor. This disparity is un-American. Starting today, we take direct aim on this inequity. We will not rest until we eliminate it," said Howard Fuller, president of the newly formed **Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)**.

"**BAEO** today declares war on a fundamentally un-American condition, where access to elementary and secondary education is a function of income and race," said Fuller. Fuller is a former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools. He is a Distinguished Professor of Education at Marquette University.

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At a National Press Club briefing, Fuller said data from the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics — NCES) confirm that when it comes to educational choice and parent satisfaction, "a canyon divides America. On one side, with few educational options, are low-income parents, mostly of color. On the other side, with many choices, are middle- and upper-income, mostly white parents."

Fuller, joined by 18 **BAEO** board members, said **BAEO** will take its message directly to the American public. Its efforts will begin with a paid public informational campaign starting Sunday, August 27. The start of **BAEO's** campaign coincides with back-to-school activities that now command the attention of American families.

Fuller said **BAEO's** campaign will begin with a quarter-page ad in the Outlook Section of Sunday's *Washington Post*. **BAEO's** messages also will appear in *The Washington Times*, *The New Republic*, and the following community papers serving primarily a Black audience:

Amsterdam News New York City
Michigan Chronicle
Afro-American Baltimore
Afro-American Washington
Cleveland Call and Post
Cincinnati Herald
LA Sentinel
Dallas Post Tribune
Jacksonville Free Press
Chicago Independent Bulletin
St. Louis American
Atlanta Daily World
Indianapolis Recorder
Philadelphia Tribune
Chicago Defender
Milwaukee Courier
Milwaukee Times
Milwaukee Community Journal

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BAEO — August 24, 2000 — add three

BAEO messages will continue through the fall and early winter, Fuller said. **BAEO** also will launch a website — **www.schoolchoiceinfo.org** — on Friday, August 25. It will provide factual information and commentary on the school choice debate.

BAEO's formation follows a two-year organizing effort spurred by growing interest among Black parents in expanding the educational options available to their children. More than 500 participants from 28 states attended two symposiums, in 1999 and 2000. **BAEO's** formation was an outgrowth of these symposiums.

"These historic gatherings produced an intergenerational coalition of Black leaders, from all political and ideological persuasions," Fuller said. "**BAEO** will actively and aggressively support parent choice to empower families and increase educational options for Black children."

Fuller said **BAEO** will form alliances and coalitions with other groups interested in working for expanded educational opportunities for low-income parents. "All parents — Black, white, Hispanic, Native American, and others — share a common interest in the education of their children. **BAEO** will form partnerships across the political and racial and ethnic spectrum with any group committed to eliminating the disparity in educational access that is evident in America."