

The Only National Black School Choice Advocacy Group Is Folding

By Arianna Prothero on [October 25, 2017 3:38 PM](#) | [No comments](#)



The [Black Alliance for Educational Options](#) is shutting down for good at the end of the year, the group announced on its website Wednesday.

Founded by school [choice pioneer Howard Fuller](#), BAEO is the only group at the national level focused exclusively on expanding school choice for low-income and working class African-American families—both through charter schools and school vouchers.

But the school choice advocacy world has become increasingly crowded in the 18 years since BAEO's founding, said Fuller who sits on the group's board, and that's meant more competition for visibility and funding.

"Some organizations, and ours is one of them, have a shelf-life," he said. "And we just reached a point where we had done great work but didn't see the ability to continue to do that work going forward."

The writing has been on the wall. A year and a half ago, **BAEO started shedding some of its state chapters** and launched a national competition to **reimagine and redesign the organization**. But that fizzled out, said Fuller, when the effort didn't yield ideas that were "transformative" enough.

Aside from helping **pass charter school laws in Alabama** and Mississippi, and voucher laws in Louisiana and the District of Columbia, Fuller said BAEO's impact is seen in the pipeline of African-American talent it helped develop in the world of education reform advocacy.

"Our legacy isn't in a specific law, but it was changing the conversation about the value of options, and most importantly the value of having black people have a major role in this conversation," he said.

I asked Fuller why close BAEO now, at a time when high profile groups advocating for African-American issues and civil rights, such as the NAACP and the Movement for Black Lives, are becoming increasingly vocal in their criticism of school choice, in particular charter schools.

Both groups called for **an all-out ban on new charter schools** opening up last summer, and **BAEO has played an important role** in countering the message from the NAACP and the Movement for Black Lives.

"It's very difficult, there's never a good time for an organization to step aside," Fuller said. "I think the efforts to push back against the NAACP and others are really going to be more effective when it's done at the local level."

Many school choice advocates took to Twitter to express their sadness at the news.