

National Black Church Initiative

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The National Black Church Initiative Calls Bank On DC Program An Utter Failure

Bank on DC Doesn't Serve African American Community

Washington DC – The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a faith-based coalition of 34,000 churches comprised of 15 denominations and 15.7 million African Americans is disappointed in the DC Government Savings Program Bank on DC. This attempt by District government and area banks is not the type of effort that the poor requires in this time of serious economic crisis. This program is an attempt to placate communities suffering at disparate rates and fails to fulfill the needs of the “unbanked” population in DC with a substantive, educational financial initiative.

While Bank on DC's goal is to decrease households with little to inadequate access to banking services – over 235,000 people by their own calculations – NBCI is sincerely doubtful that this program will be capable of achieving their goals.

Our doubt stems from the following problematic characteristics of the Bank on DC Program:

1. The partnerships that the District government has forged with area banks are empty. These partnering banks are not mandated, as part of their agreement to join Bank on DC, to invest manpower, time and most importantly financial backing to this program.
2. The banks adopted the program largely because they did not have to commit any substantial resources to the project and were able to note their efforts to fulfill their obligations under the Community Reinvestment Act – thereby projecting the image of cooperation and community support without effort.
3. There are no sufficient continuing education on the benefits of saving – one of the most necessary components to a successful long-term financial initiative.

4. Given this time, where banks are closing branches – particularly in minority and poor communities – this is a double whammy to the poor. According to an article in the New York Times entitled *Bank Closings Tilt Toward Poor Areas* by Nelson D. Schwartz, “in 2010, for the first time in 15 years, more bank branches closed than opened across the United States. An analysis of government data shows, however, that even as banks shut branches in poorer areas, they continued to expand in wealthier ones, despite decades of government regulations requiring financial institutions to meet the credit needs of poor and middle-class neighborhoods.”

Rev. Anthony Evans, “Last summer, NBCI asked one of the participating banks – United Bank – to sponsor a comprehensive financial literacy program. They refused, pointing to their participation in the Bank on DC Program. They have done nothing for DC residents. This is why we have protested their banks and plan to protest all participating banks as we know they are not helping District residents.”

NBCI’s remedy is simple – open bank branches in poor neighborhoods. Offer courses in financial literacy in communities currently underserved. Work with non-profits who provide financial literacy programming. Increase transparency and thereby restore trust among consumers who are weary of banking institutions.

We are hopeful that after years of ineffectual programs District residents will tire of empty initiatives and demand that area banks achieve a higher standard of service. These goals are not impossible to achieve – NBCI has been a leader in tackling stubborn issues facing the African American community for over 20 years and we will continue to advocate on behalf of our community until these disparities are eradicated.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The National Black Church Initiative’s methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science. The National Black Church Initiative’s purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose main mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI’s programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com.

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