



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Education Leads Discussion at Senator Sanders' Community Clergy Breakfast

JAMES SANDERS JR. November 18, 2016



State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) today hosted his monthly Community Clergy Breakfast at Church of God Christian Academy. The topic of discussion was education, with a specific focus on charter schools vs. public schools.

“Public education is one of the greatest sources of movement for people in this country,” Sanders said. “I have personally benefited from it. My mother was a domestic and my father was a sharecropper. He had a third grade education. She had a fifth grade education. I was

able to go to Brooklyn College and graduate. It was an incredible journey due in part to public education.”

This month’s special guest speaker was Billy Easton, the Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education, a coalition mobilizing communities across the state to ensure high quality education for all students regardless of zip code. Easton drew a distinction between two different types of charter schools, those that are community based and run by non-profit organizations, and corporate charter chains. The former, he said, work to fill a local need that is not being satisfied, while the latter is driven by a political agenda.

Some of the pitfalls of corporate charter chains like Success Academy, Easton said, are high suspension rates, particularly among minority students, a “drill-and-kill” approach to teaching, also known as teaching to the test, a system that lacks transparency, and one that diverts funding away from public schools. Easton said he supports the NAACP’s proposed moratorium on charter schools until such time as some of those problems can be corrected.

With regard to improving public schools, Easton noted that an increase in funding is necessary. He said as a result of the landmark lawsuit in 2007 by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, New York State created the Foundation Aid Formula to fairly fund high need schools. Ten years later the state has failed to deliver this funding. School statewide are still owed \$3.9 billion, schools in New York City are owed \$ 1.6 billion and schools in the 10th Senatorial District are owed \$49 million, Easton said.

Another guest speaker at the breakfast was Sean Torres, Engagement Coordinator with NYC Men Teach, an initiative which was created to inspire more men of color to become teachers in New York City through engagement and recruitment efforts. Some 40 percent of NYC school teachers are people of color, but of that 40 percent, only 8.5 percent are male. In

contrast, male students of color make up 43 of the entire public school population.

Senator Sanders' Community Clergy Breakfasts are aimed at educating clergy and giving them the tools and information they need to help themselves and their congregations.

We would like to thank Sean Murphy, an authorized representative of Constellation, a supplier of power and natural gas products for homes and businesses, for sponsoring this month's breakfast and Church of God Christian Academy for allowing us to use their space to host the event.