



MN ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Unleashing education from convention

BILL WILSON

2017 MN CHARTER SCHOOL PIONEER AWARD

Bill Wilson has been doing “pioneering” work throughout his lifetime in the field of civil and human rights, and education.

49 years ago he founded the Inner City Youth League to provide a variety of needed services for African-American youth in St. Paul. He co-founded the Students for Racial Progress at the University of Minnesota, and served as the Minnesota Commissioner of Human Rights under Governor Wendell Anderson, and today serves on the Board of the WISE Scholarship Foundation.

Bill was a pioneer in the City of St. Paul as the first African-American elected to the St. Paul City Council, and served as Council President for 4 years of his 13 years on the Council.

When Bill ended his public service career he turned his vision again on providing opportunities for African-American youth in St. Paul. His vision for creating educational opportunities for African- American youth took reality through the founding of Higher Ground Academy.

In 1999, Higher Ground Academy opened its doors as an Afro-Centric school that expanded over the years to serve students in grades K-12.

18 years later, Bill continues to serve as the visionary founder and Executive Director of the Academy – which has over the years has continued to be cited as a school that “*beats the odds.*”

Throughout his career as the founder and Director of the Academy, Bill has continued to be a leader speaking out for and working tirelessly to expand opportunities for African-Americans, and other minority families and youth, including a new generation of immigrant students to have educational choices of their making.

In testimony before a State Senate Committee in 2014, Bill said, “*It is often said that a child has no choice in the circumstances when entering this world, but through quality education they can in many cases shape, mold and determine their future.*”

Bill Wilson you are a **Minnesota Charter School Pioneer** for “*Unleashing Education from Convention*” through shaping educational opportunities for African-American youth in St. Paul, so that they have the education they need to determine their own futures.