



TENNESSEE ASSOCIATION of  
COLLEGES for TEACHER EDUCATION

July 1, 2022

Dear Governor Lee,

The Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (TACTE) represents all public, private, and independent education preparation providers in Tennessee. We are deeply concerned by the recent news story posted by *News5 Nashville* in which Dr. Larry Arnn made disparaging comments about the teaching profession. While we have not seen an unedited video of this meeting, this reporting did not show a response from you in defense of Tennessee's teachers. We urge you to speak out now in defense of teachers and professional educators.

Dr. Arnn's comments insult Tennesseans dedicated to teaching and learning, as well as thousands of students across the State attending programs with the goal of becoming professional educators. Effective professional educators are essential for economic mobility and career advancement of Tennesseans. Because of Tennessee educators, businesses are attracted to Tennessee to benefit from a well-educated workforce. Devaluing and insulting these educators is not in the best interest of Tennessee's children, economy, or reputation.

In Tennessee, we have high standards, rigorous assessments, and accountability for individuals aspiring to become teachers. In fact, Tennessee's standards for becoming a teacher are some of the highest in the nation. We have equally high standards for Educator Preparation Providers, and the quality of our programs are scrutinized yearly by your Department of Education along with the State Board of Education. The results of these accountability measures are reported publicly on Tennessee's Educator Preparation Report Card.

Tennessee teachers work diligently each day to educate students and leverage their knowledge, experience, and expertise to make informed decisions to support the growth and learning of Tennessee's children. We work with prospective and experienced educators on a daily basis, and we see their dedication and skill firsthand. We stand behind Tennessee's teachers who our institutions prepare. We urge you to do so as well.

Teachers and Educator Preparation Programs are held accountable for designing and implementing the requirements, policies, and standards set forth by Tennessee's Department of Education, State Board of Education, and General Assembly. If we fall short of Tennessee's expectations, teachers and educator preparation programs alike are held accountable.

Additionally, statements such as those made by Dr. Arnn minimize a foundational principle of our democracy- the importance of education. Teachers shoulder the responsibility of ensuring the lasting impact of an educated populace.

Schools, like many professions and industries right now, are struggling with persistent vacancies and hard-to-staff positions. Dr. Arnn's divisive rhetoric undercuts efforts to recruit individuals into the profession during a time when teachers are desperately needed. His statements are particularly discouraging for aspiring teachers who are inspired to help make an even brighter future for Tennessee's schoolchildren. Again, we urge you to speak out in support of current and future teachers. Let them know that they are valued and needed, as Dr. Arnn's comments have left them discouraged and frustrated.



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Finally, we believe the Educator Preparation Programs in the Volunteer State represent demonstrably smart, highly-talented, dedicated, selfless, and passionate students, faculty, and staff. We take great pride in what we do, and we would love the opportunity to showcase our work supporting an exceptional education for every student, everywhere, every day in Tennessee.

We sincerely invite you to visit with our education faculty, staff, mentor teachers, and students. See for yourself why Dr. Arnn's uninformed and cynical perspective is inaccurate. Please feel free to contact TACTE to arrange a visit at any of the colleges, schools, and programs of education that we collectively represent. We are happy to coordinate visits convenient to you. Additionally, we extend an invitation to join us for our annual TACTE conference, which will take place September 12-13, 2022, at the Cool Springs Marriott. Please know that this is a standing invitation; if you cannot make it this fall, we welcome you to join us at future meetings.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our position, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

David Cihak, TACTE President  
Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
TACTE email address [tnacte@gmail.com](mailto:tnacte@gmail.com)

CC Commissioner Penny Schwinn, Department of Education  
Chair Lillian Hartgrove, State Board of Education  
Senator Jon Lundberg, Senate Education Committee Acting Chair  
Senator Raumes Akbari, Senate Education Committee 2nd Vice-Chair  
Representative Mark White, House Education Administration Chair  
Representative Chris Hurt, House Education Administration Vice-Chair  
Representative Debra O. Moody, House Education Instruction Chair  
Representative Terri Lynn Weaver, House Education Instruction Vice-Chair