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ATPE Statement on Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for Texas Public Educators

AUSTIN, Texas—In response to plans for distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine, [the Association of Texas Professional Educators \(ATPE\)](http://atpe.org) shares the following statement:

The availability of a COVID-19 vaccine is welcome news. Vaccine access should make it easier for Texas public schools to resume normal operations, including the necessary step of getting students and educators physically back into their classrooms, sooner rather than later. As ATPE has repeatedly expressed, remote schooling is a poor substitute for in-person instruction, and the many reports we have heard of students struggling under this school year's myriad disruptions are troubling.

That's why ATPE is pleased to learn that Texas plans to prioritize vaccine access for its most vulnerable populations and critical workers in its multi-phase roll-out plans.

The Texas Department of State Health Services has announced school nurses will be included in its first phase of vaccine distribution, which covers the healthcare workers who play a vital role in the diagnosing and treating of patients. The second phase will cover front-line workers at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of their work.

Based upon our discussions with state officials in recent weeks, ATPE is confident that educators working in Texas public schools will be included in this second phase and have early access to the vaccine, if they choose to receive it. This is a critical step to getting Texas back to normal. Educators are and have always been on the front lines doing work that is integral to the well-being of Texas and its citizens.

ATPE understands some Texans will be hesitant to seek out the COVID-19 vaccine, while others are eager to obtain the additional protection as soon as possible. We also know that it will likely be some time before the vaccine becomes widely available. However, Texas public schools are the backbones of our communities and vital to the economic success of our great state, and early access to the COVID-19 vaccine will allow educators a chance to return to work without fear of the virus that has wreaked havoc upon all of our lives.

As we learn more about the vaccines up for approval, ATPE urges state and federal officials to share information clearly and widely about any COVID-19 vaccines that become available. Texans deserve to know what options are available to them, the risks and benefits of vaccination, when and how they may obtain a vaccine, and what to expect.

Now is the time for over-communication. We hope that state leaders recognize the need for transparency and consistency in making sure that Texans fully understand their options, and we look forward to more news in the coming weeks.

About the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)

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Founded in 1980, ATPE is the leading educators' association in Texas with approximately 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, and future, retired, and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for Texas' five million public school students. | atpe.org

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