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ATPE Statement on Gov. Abbott's Vaccine Distribution Press Conference

"The vaccine distribution announcement is welcome news, but we are disappointed with the lack of assurance that public school employees will soon have the option to receive vaccines," says Texas' largest educator association

AUSTIN, Texas—The [Association of Texas Professional Educators](http://atpe.org) (ATPE)—the largest educator association in Texas—is thankful for the scientists, medical experts, and health and safety officials who have helped make the COVID-19 vaccine a reality.

At a Dec. 17 press briefing, Gov. **Greg Abbott** announced that Texas is slated to receive approx. 224,000 doses of the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine by the end of the week, something that will doubtlessly prove invaluable to the many emergency and front-line health care workers putting their lives on the line daily to help stem the tide of COVID-19 effects. By the end of the year, Abbott estimates that more than a million vaccines will have been distributed throughout the state. Again, welcome news.

ATPE is disappointed, however, that no vaccine distribution details have so far been provided for the thousands of Texas educators and public school employees who are also on the front lines. At the same time, while we wish that Gov. Abbott had provided more assurance, [ATPE remains confident that educators in Texas public schools will be included in the second phase of vaccine distribution.](#)

By vaccinating school staff, Texas would likely see fewer disruptions for its thousands of students. As it stands, teachers exposed to COVID-19 must quarantine at home, and oftentimes, instruction shifts online due to a shortage of substitute educators. With the paid sick leave benefits provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act set to expire on Dec. 31, vaccine prioritization is critical to keeping Texas public schools open in the coming months.

As educators continue to worry about their health and safety, the health and safety of their families, and the health and safety of their students, it is vital that they be given a reasonable timetable about when they might receive the vaccine, if they so choose. Clear communication to educators by state leaders must be a priority.

About the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)

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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