

Christian University Fights Back Against 'Unlawful' Elementary School Board

Arizona Christian University officials are appalled by an Arizona elementary school district's decision to ban ACU's student teachers because of its commitment to Christian values, and the school's president says it will fight back against the ban.

Last week, Washington Elementary School District board member Tamillia Valenzuela told the rest of the board that hiring Christian teachers is "not safe." While she says she "full-heartedly" believes in religious freedom and people being able to practice whatever faith they have," Valenzuela took exception to language on ACU's website, accusing the school to be "committed to Jesus Christ and accomplishing His will and advancements on earth as in heaven."

On Feb. 23, school district officials recommended renewing an 11-year partnership with ACU to have its students engage classes as student teachers. However, the Washington Elementary School Board members, three of whom identify as members of the LGBT community, opted to nix the agreement and argued that "having student teachers with biblical values in the state's largest and one of the best elementary school districts would pose too much of a threat to LGBTQ students.

"The school board's recent decision to ban ACU students from serving as student teachers was done for one reason only: our university's commitment to our Christian convictions," ACU President Len Munsil said in a statement to The Christian Post. "That's wrong, it's unlawful and it will only hurt the district's students.

"Religious liberty and freedom of conscience are bedrock

American principles,” Munsil told The Christian Post. “We are exploring our options to defend the rights of our students.”

Munsil said that there had not been any issues involving LGBTQ students over the 11-year period of partnership with the Washington elementary school district, and that student teachers have “done such a great job.”

Many of ACU’s student teachers, he said, were hired full-time after graduation.

✖ “Administrators have time and again asked us to send more ACU students because of the quality of our students’ work and their love and servant’s hearts for all,” Munsil said. “For years Arizona Christian University has partnered with the Washington Elementary School District. More than 100 ACU students have served the district, including 25 student teachers.”

The high quality of their work wasn’t good enough for some board members, including Valenzuela, Nikkie Gomez-Whaley (President), Jenni Abbott-Bayardi (Vice President); Kylie Clayton and Lindsey Peterson. {eoa}

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