

School Board Member Says Hiring Christian Teachers 'Not Safe'

A school board member for the Washington Elementary School District in Phoenix, Arizona, who describes herself as a bilingual, disabled, neuro-divergent, queer, Black Latina, says she opposes the hiring of Christian teachers and says she would not feel "safe" in a school that does.

Tamillia Valenzuela expressed her concerns at a recent board meeting and said she would be opposed to having a contract with a Christian university over the religious and biblical beliefs they espouse.

The Washington Elementary School District has had an ongoing contract with Arizona Christian University for five years, an agreement that enabled student teachers to be placed in schools for field experience. The contract opened up opportunities for recruitment and hiring, Fox News Digital reported.

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Fox News reported that Valenzuela "blasted" Arizona Christian University over its Christian beliefs and said she was "disheartened" to learn about the contract that had been in place for half a decade.

Valenzuela, who, during the school meeting sported cat ears on her head, said she's all for religious liberty, but that she had "some concerns regarding this particular institution."

"... I full-heartedly believe in religious freedom and people being able to practice whatever faith they have," Valenzuela said. "... And while I understand we are currently in a

situation across the nation that we have a teacher shortage and recruiting ... is really difficult, my concern,[is] when I go to Arizona Christian University's website, [they are] 'committed to Jesus Christ, accomplishing His will and advancements on earth as in heaven.'

"Part of their values is .. [to] 'transform the culture with truth by promoting the biblically-informed values that are foundational to Western civilization, including the centrality of family, traditional sexual morality and lifelong marriage between one man and one woman.'"

Valenzuela pointed out that three of the school board members are part of the LGBTQ community, and that bringing in teachers from Arizona Christian University would greatly impact those board members.

"If we're bringing people in whose mission [has] ... been with their institution's education that very plainly on their website ... that above all else, it was to influence people to be biblically-minded, how does that hold space for people of other faiths? How does that hold space for our members of the LGBTQ community?

 "At some point, we need to get real with ourselves and take a look at who we're making legal contracts with and the message that is sending to our community. Because that makes me feel like I could not be safe in this school district."

The school board voted to dissolve the contract with Arizona Christian University on Feb. 23.

Another board member, Kyle Clayton, blasted ACU for "teaching with a biblical lens."

"Proselytizing is embedded in how they teach. And I just don't believe that belongs in schools," Clayton said. {eo}

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Shawn A. Akers *is the online editor at Charisma Media.*