



TAAE Statement of Concern and Confidence

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April 17, 2026

Dr. Travis Park,
National FFA Organization
6060 FFA Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46278

Dear Dr. Park,

On behalf of the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators (TAAE), we write to formally express serious concern regarding the current direction, decision-making, and leadership of the National FFA Organization.

As agricultural educators, we are entrusted with delivering agricultural education in classrooms, laboratories, and communities across Tennessee. We work daily with students whose experiences are directly shaped by the programs, expectations, and leadership of the National FFA Organization. Our perspective is grounded not in theory, but in the practical realities of agricultural education and student development.

This communication is being shared directly with the full National FFA Board of Directors to ensure transparency and awareness among those charged with governance of the organization.

Mission Alignment and Organizational Direction

The National FFA Organization exists to support and advance agricultural education. However, there is now a clear and documented pattern of concern among agricultural educators that the organization's focus has shifted away from this foundational purpose.

The FFA mission states that the organization "makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education." This mission has long served as the guiding principle for agricultural educators across the country.

It is essential that the focus of the National FFA Organization remain firmly rooted in agricultural education. While growth and adaptation are expected, initiatives and messaging that appear disconnected from this core purpose have created significant concern regarding organizational alignment and priorities.

The strength of FFA has always been grounded in its direct connection to classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experiences, and leadership development within the context of agriculture. When that focus becomes unclear, it raises serious questions about the direction of the organization.

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Consistency, Judgment, and Leadership Decisions

TAAE is increasingly concerned by inconsistencies in leadership decisions and expectations placed on students and student leaders. Situations involving National FFA Officers have raised serious concerns regarding fairness, due process, and potential double standards. For example, legal action was taken in response to a publicly communicated and allegedly improper removal of a National FFA Officer. Yet, purported inappropriate conduct by multiple senior staff members has gone unaddressed.

Additionally, invoking a previously discredited claim of student racism involving a Tennessee chapter at the 2021 National FFA Convention as justification for broader organizational policies has raised significant concerns among educators about accuracy, context, and fairness. Furthermore, presenting information in a manner that appears to imply that students from Tennessee violated FFA's Code of Ethics to the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means has severely eroded the trust that many agricultural educators in our state had in the national organization.

Educators have also observed inconsistent expectations placed on student leaders, particularly regarding personal expression, including faith and individual perspective. While professionalism is expected, leadership development should foster authenticity and growth—not create confusion through uneven or conflicting expectations. Taken together, these patterns reflect a breakdown in consistency and sound leadership judgment, which has contributed to a growing loss of confidence among educators.

Student Leadership Development and Officer Experience

National FFA Officers are among the most visible student leaders in agricultural education. These individuals are still students, and their experience should reflect the organization's commitment to leadership development, personal growth, and authenticity. There is growing concern that the expectations placed on these young leaders have, at times, extended beyond appropriate leadership development and into areas that limit authentic student expression and create undue pressure to conform to specific messaging or perspectives.

Agricultural educators believe strongly that leadership development should empower students to think critically, lead with integrity, and represent themselves genuinely. When expectations appear inconsistent or overly restrictive, it raises serious concerns about whether the officer experience remains aligned with the mission of developing student leaders.

Concerns regarding student leadership expectations are further compounded by longstanding organizational guidance related to inclusion and expression. Documents such as "Creating Common Ground: Suggestions for Compliance with the National FFA Inclusion Statement," adopted by the National FFA Board of Directors in 2018, establish expectations that public reflections, invocations, and communications representing the organization be free of faith-based references.

While the goal of fostering inclusive environments is important and supported by agricultural educators, there is growing concern that the application of these expectations may limit faith-based expression among student leaders. When expectations appear to restrict one form of personal expression while encouraging others, it raises serious concerns regarding consistency, balance, and the overall approach to inclusivity within student leadership development.



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Governance, External Influence, and Escalating Scrutiny

These concerns are not isolated and are now being examined at multiple levels.

The Committee on Ways and Means of the U.S. House of Representatives has formally initiated inquiry into the National FFA Organization's partnerships, priorities, and alignment with its tax-exempt purpose, raising significant questions regarding governance and direction.

The Office of the Indiana Attorney General has also initiated review regarding whether certain organizational practices are consistent with nonprofit obligations and public benefit expectations.

In addition, a broad group of former FFA officers and members has publicly expressed concern regarding the organization's direction, citing mission drift and the impact of recent initiatives on the unity and purpose of FFA.

Collectively, these developments represent a level of external scrutiny that is unprecedented for the organization and underscore the seriousness of the concerns being raised.

While partnerships and external support are important, it is critical that all relationships and initiatives remain clearly aligned with the mission of agricultural education and free from influence that could compromise that purpose.

Impact on Agricultural Education and Local Programs

The cumulative effect of these issues is being felt at the classroom and community level.

Agricultural educators are responsible for representing the National FFA Organization to students, parents, administrators, and community stakeholders. When confidence in national leadership is diminished, it directly impacts program credibility, student participation, and community trust.

The strength of FFA has always depended on the confidence placed in it by those delivering agricultural education. That confidence is now being challenged.

In addition, agricultural educators are increasingly concerned about the potential downstream implications of ongoing federal and state scrutiny regarding the organization's tax-exempt status. Local FFA chapters operate under the broader structure of the National FFA Organization, and any change to that status could have unintended consequences for local programs. This possibility introduces additional uncertainty for educators, schools, and communities who rely on the stability and credibility of the FFA to support agricultural education.

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Conclusion and Call for Action

Based on the pattern of concerns outlined above—including inconsistencies in leadership decisions, questions regarding governance and alignment, and the growing level of external scrutiny—the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators can no longer confidently support the current leadership direction of the National FFA Organization.

We call upon the National FFA Board of Directors to take immediate and deliberate action to review leadership decisions, organizational priorities, and governance practices, and to take the necessary steps to restore alignment with the mission of agricultural education and rebuild trust among educators, students, and stakeholders.

At its core, the National FFA Organization must remain unwavering in its commitment to agricultural education as the foundation of all programming, leadership development, and decision-making.

Based on the pattern of concerns outlined above—including inconsistencies in leadership decisions, questions regarding governance and alignment, and the growing level of external scrutiny—the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators formally expresses a loss of confidence in the organization's current direction and leadership.

Sincerely,

Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators
Board of Directors

Approved: April 17, 2026 by TAAE Board of Directors

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