



American Association of **Physics Teachers**[®]
Enhancing the understanding and appreciation of physics through teaching

Dear Esteemed AAPT Members,

We hope this message finds you well and thriving in your pursuits within the world of physics education. We are writing to provide you with an important update regarding the upcoming 2024 AAPT Winter Meeting in New Orleans, originally scheduled to be held in New Orleans in 2022.

As you may recall, early in the COVID-19 pandemic, we rescheduled several of our contracted meeting sites, including the 2022 AAPT Winter Meeting, which was originally scheduled for New Orleans.

You may be aware of recent legislation affecting abortion rights and transgender individuals in the state of Louisiana. Because of the passage of these laws, in August of 2022, California added Louisiana to the [list of states](#) subject to a ban on California state-funded and state-sponsored travel. At the time AAPT used California's list as one of our guidelines for site selection, since then California has rescinded this list in favor of other efforts. Although the California travel ban is no longer in effect, we recognize that Louisiana's legislation affects our members' well-being at the conference. This letter offers transparency around our decision-making and describes our efforts to mitigate the harm that we recognize may come to members of our community in Louisiana, as it does in many states in the current political climate.

The contracts for the 2022 AAPT Winter Meeting in New Orleans were originally signed in 2019. At that time, no discriminatory legislation had been enacted, and New Orleans had been selected as the host city for the meeting due to its unique appeal and accessibility for our members. The contract was renegotiated in December 2021 after it was decided to reschedule the 2022 Winter Meeting because of the uptick in COVID cases. AAPT renegotiated two future winter meetings, one in 2024 and another in 2027, to avoid large penalties.

Unfortunately, the pandemic's impact on our operations and financial constraints have put AAPT in a financial situation in which breaking pre-existing contracts to relocate meetings to alternative locations poses a threat to the sustainability of the organization.

In September, California decided to rescind the legislation that restricted state-funded and state-sponsored travel to states with anti-LGBTQIA+ laws. However, we are aware that this doesn't

change the impact of Louisiana's legislation on the LGBTQIA+ community and women's health. *This legislation does not align with AAPT values, and we are taking steps (described below) to mitigate the harm that may come to our members as a result of meeting in a hostile environment.*

We are now considering how decisions will be made regarding future AAPT national meeting locations. Discussion will be centered on a move towards city-based (rather than state-based) site evaluation, in terms of the safety, welfare, and comfort of our members. We expect to work with the AAPT community as we revise our site selection principles and policies to not only provide safe spaces for our members but to also support the work of local organizations whose mission and values align with AAPT's.

We want to assure you that the AAPT remains committed to inclusivity, diversity, and supporting all of our members, including those who are affected by these legislative developments. Our goal is to create a safe and welcoming environment for all attendees, regardless of the meeting's location.

We are actively taking steps to address concerns and ensure that the 2024 AAPT Winter Meeting in New Orleans adheres to our core values. We are:

1. **Engaging with Local LGBTQIA+ and Womxn's Health Organizations:** We are collaborating with LGBTQIA+ and Womxn's Health organizations in New Orleans to inform our meeting policies and practices and create a supportive and inclusive environment for all attendees.
2. **Providing Support and Resources:** We are committed to working toward ensuring that all attendees of the AAPT Winter Meeting in New Orleans feel safe, respected, and welcomed, and taking feedback in an ongoing way about how to improve. To this end, we have a number of initiatives and resources in place:
 - Gender Neutral Bathrooms: The venue for the Winter Meeting will be equipped with gender neutral bathrooms to provide a comfortable and inclusive experience for all attendees.
 - LGBTQIA+ Meet-Ups: We will organize meet-up sessions specifically for LGBTQIA+ members, creating opportunities for networking, sharing experiences, and building connections within the community.
 - Pronoun Stickers: Pronoun stickers will be available for all attendees to wear, promoting a culture of inclusivity and respect for individuals' gender identities.
 - Womxn's Health: We are dedicated to fostering an environment that supports womxn's health. While we may have limitations, we strive to provide a space where discussions about womxn's health can take place openly and without stigma.

- **Code of Conduct:** Our comprehensive Code of Conduct works toward ensuring that all participants, regardless of their background, are treated with respect and dignity. Any behavior that goes against these principles will not be tolerated.
- 3. **DEI Council:** We are working with the newly formed DEI Council to address inclusivity and create an atmosphere that reduces harm for everyone participating in the event.
- 4. **Open Dialogue:** We encourage an open dialogue where members can share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. Your feedback is essential in helping us make informed decisions that best reflect the needs and interests of our diverse membership.

We recognize that this is not at all ideal, and we will work with you to support a positive conference experience. We welcome your feedback, and we want to do everything we can to co-create a conference atmosphere that simultaneously takes seriously the context and creates opportunities for connection.

The 2024 AAPT Winter Meeting in New Orleans presents a unique opportunity to strengthen connections, exchange knowledge, and drive positive change within our community. We assure you that our decisions will always be guided by our unwavering dedication to the safety, well-being, and inclusivity of our members.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we navigate these circumstances. Together, we will create a memorable and enriching experience at the 2024 AAPT Winter Meeting in New Orleans.

Sincerely,

David Marasco, AAPT DEI Council Co-Chair
Catherine Herne, AAPT DEI Council Co-Chair
Duane Merrell, AAPT President
Beth Cunningham, AAPT CEO