

To the teachers of Hamilton County Schools,



**The staff and board of the Public Education Foundation deeply appreciate your service, leadership and commitment to the teaching profession, and this letter serves to recognize your impact upon our community. Please accept our gratitude, as we honor you during Teacher Appreciation Week and continuously in the work that we do to support public education.**

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You have one of the most important jobs in the world, and you have done it with grace and care during a time of enormous challenge, disruption and trauma. On behalf of PEF, the community, and my family, I thank you for all the ways you have shown up for our students. Thank you for having the courage to explore tough conversations about the impact of systemic racism and bias upon the special place we all want school to be. Thank you for the time you have invested in the social-emotional well-being of our students; I know how much they appreciate the ways you have nurtured those connections with their peers and with you. Thank you for the ways you have adapted your teaching practice to create the spark of engagement in a range of new contexts. Thank you for taking risks, learning new things, and being willing to fail. Together, you are the best family a community could ever have, and you are the bridge to a brighter future. Know that your courage, your care, and your creativity will carry a legacy long beyond your time in this profession, as young people carry forward the love of learning that you helped to nurture within them. I remain committed to elevating this community's appreciation for teachers as highly valued professionals and artisans--the appreciation that you deserve.

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From time to time, I will ask a group of people if they can name a teacher who changed the trajectory of their life. When I do that, every single person, without fail, recalls a name. For many, it's the name of a teacher who inspired them twenty, thirty, forty years ago. Yet they still remember that teacher's name. There's no other profession that is true for. When I ask my children—three proud graduates of Hamilton County Schools—they struggle a bit. They don't want to name just one teacher. Three, four, five names come to their minds. My experience at Public Education Foundation tells me that many, many proud graduates of Hamilton County Schools, if asked, would also want to name more than one teacher who changed their life. As the grandson, son, and husband of a teacher, I know how hard good teachers work. At PEF, we strive to create opportunities that help you do your work—Leadership Fellows, STEM Fellows, Fund For Teachers Fellows, Osborne Fellows, Project Inspire, Teacherpreneurs, eLabs. Our goal is to support you as you change lives. You deserve this—and much more. For what you do every day, even during a global pandemic, thank you.

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Your work this year has been an inspiration to us all. Under ordinary circumstances, to stand among teachers is to stand among giants. You constantly and seamlessly transition through countless roles each and every day. One minute you are planning the details of a collaborative debate, the next, you're consoling a child as they work through a personal challenge, all while maintaining composure, leading your full classroom, and projecting confidence as you pour into your students' lives. You volunteer to lead extracurricular activities, communicate with parents and community members, and seek out opportunities to learn and grow so you can continue to reimagine what is possible for your students. Then, with all of the layered challenges and disruptions brought on by the pandemic, you somehow dug even deeper and found the strength and compassion to lead our students. From reimagining how to bring engaging physical education lessons home to students, to pivoting over and over again to accommodate new schedules and instructional mediums, this year tested your resourcefulness and resilience—and you answered the call! Thank you for what you have done for our community, for our families, and for our students. We deeply appreciate each of you, your dedication, and your heart. Your impact is noticed, and we are grateful for you.

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In his book, *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, Todd Whitaker writes, "Always remember that the best thing about teaching is that it matters, and the hardest thing about teaching is that it matters every day." On behalf of PEF and the hundreds of thousands of students whose lives you have impacted, and continue to impact in ways both great and small, we extend our deep gratitude. While some teachers win the awards and get the public recognition, they will be the first to acknowledge that many of their colleagues are equally praiseworthy. As we celebrate you during Teacher Appreciation Week, just know that somewhere here or in a city you may never visit--and beyond your lifetime on earth--some student will be calling your name out loud and telling the story about the difference you made.

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TEACHERS!!!! This week is to celebrate YOU! We want to honor you for what you do with and for our kids, our community, and our country. Every day you impact lives in ways you don't even see. Keep making a difference! #TeacherAppreciationWeek #TeachersRock

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Although I generally work behind the scenes, I am inspired by the stories I hear every week about student successes in our schools and beyond. Those success stories happen because of the great teachers at Hamilton County Schools. When I think of the people who had the most influence in my life, most of those were teachers. Even in an especially challenging year, your dedication, passion, innovation, and love are profoundly influencing our students every day. Thank you for what you do to inspire students and to prepare them for life.

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I am in awe of your power and persistence especially in the face of a challenging year. I salute all teachers for your diligence and perseverance to impact lives, support families and stay safe. Your service and your passion do not go unnoticed. I thank you for all that you are and all you have given to the profession. You are true heroes.