



Statement in Response to Proposed Legislation Denying Evidence-Based Care for Transgender People Under 18 Years of Age and to Penalize Professionals who Provide that Medical Care

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and its US chapter, the United States Professional Association for Transgender Health (USPATH), vehemently oppose the legislation being proposed in Florida (HB 1365), South Carolina (HB 4716), South Dakota (HB 1057), Colorado (HB 20-1114), and similar legislation in other states. These bills seek to deny evidence-based care for transgender people under 18 years of age and to penalize professionals who provide that medical care. These bills will punish practitioners of gender affirming care with revocation of their medical license, or up to 15 years in prison in some states. These bills will treat health care providers as if they committed manslaughter or arson.

Many of the procedures mentioned by these bills are not even offered to transgender youth, revealing these bills to be alarmist expressions of ill-informed opinion. Guidance for the provision of medical care for transgender youth is outlined within the 7th edition of Standards of Care (SOC) for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-Nonconforming People created by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (Coleman et al. 2012). The guidelines differentiate between children and adolescents with regard to the provision of care.

Under the SOC, children do not receive any of the medical care identified within these bills, but mental health and social supports are provided to them along with their families. Surgeries on genitals and reproductive systems are considered for people who are typically over 18 years of age (depending on the age of consent and other relevant factors in the pertinent jurisdiction) and have been living in their affirmed gender for at least 12 months. Medical treatments that might be recommend for certain adolescents include puberty-blocking medication and – in carefully selected cases – hormone replacement therapies and surgery, most often non-genital. These treatments are not offered without conscientious medical attention and informed clinical evaluation.

Puberty suppression has been found to be very beneficial for transgender adolescents, and it is reversible (Mahfouda et al. 2017; Olson-Kennedy et al. 2018; Hodax et al. 2019; Salas-Humara et al. 2019). Further, a recently published study has concluded that transgender adults who had access to pubertal blockers had a lower risk of suicidal ideation compared to those transgender adults who did not have access to pubertal blockers (Turban et al. 2020).

We are disturbed by these attempts to legislate medical treatment without expert guidance from the relevant national medical organizations or even testimony from experienced, qualified local or regional providers and patients for whom these treatments have been beneficial, if not lifesaving. Given the climate in which these bills are presented, however, we can imagine that few young patients or their parents would be willing to present themselves for the scrutiny of potentially hostile legislators and the activists who are promoting these damaging bills.

All medical treatment is a crucial and very personal service that virtually everyone depends upon at some point in their lives, and it should not be delivered or restricted according to the whims of distant lawmakers who know little or nothing about the circumstances of an individual's life. Proper medical care for any condition is a matter best negotiated between patients and their trained and qualified medical providers who are relying on clinical evidence and experience.

These bills attempt to criminalize treatments or at best restrict medical professionals from helping their patients and their families. Since transgender children, adolescents, or adults cannot be legislated out of existence, these bills seem to be a misguided attempt to prevent transgender people from coming forward for services they need in order to live healthy lives.

We urge you to reject these harmful bills and assure your transgender constituents and their families that their health and well-being is just as important as your own.

[Click here for an additional WPATH Statement in Response to Calls for Banning Evidence-Based Supportive Health Interventions for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Youth.](#)

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