

JOINT STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF BEST PRACTICE CARE FOR TRANSGENDER YOUTH

Access to affirming healthcare for transgender youth promotes their health and well-being and is quite literally lifesaving. As signatories to this letter, it is our position – in line with every major, credible medical association – that all people should be able to express their gender identity without fear of rejection or harm, and to access age-appropriate, best-practice healthcare. We oppose any attempts to ban or criminalize this basic care, which represents one of the most extreme political attacks on transgender people in recent memory.

Best practice care for youth who are expressing a different gender than expected is centered on families providing opportunities for the child to explore their gender identity freely, without judgment or shame. This primarily means a “social transition,” in which a child can live in the gender that is most authentic to them, including name, pronouns, attire, and hairstyle. Over time, this continuum of care, under a doctor’s supervision, can also include a delay of puberty, which gives young people time and space to make their own decisions about their lived gender.

This approach is recommended by the prevailing standards of care, best practices, and guidelines endorsed by national and international professional organizations including the World Professional Association of Transgender Health, the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Endocrine Society, the Pediatric Endocrine Society, and the National Association of Social Workers. It has been affirmed by state-level medical associations in multiple states where lawmakers have attempted to criminalize this care.

This affirming model of care is a thoughtful, deliberative, private, personal, and individualized process inclusive of the child and their parents or guardians, as well as medical experts.

It is also lifesaving. The data is very clear that family and social acceptance and affirmation of a child’s gender identity, including access to appropriate healthcare, is associated with significantly improved well-being and mental health for transgender youth. Denying this best practice medical care and support to transgender youth can be life-threatening, contributing to significant increases in depression, social isolation, anxiety, substance abuse, suicidal behavior, and heightened risk of lower educational attainment and homelessness.

We, support evidence-based, best practice healthcare. We affirm parents’ rights to support their children’s gender identity and to access affirming care, without fear of intervention or retribution from non-experts. We oppose any efforts to restrict the ability of healthcare professionals to provide care consistent with established standards and best practice guidelines. We oppose the criminalization of expert healthcare providers and of healthcare itself, and the criminalization of loving parents for doing what’s best for their children.