

July 18, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the 63 undersigned organizations dedicated to advancing the science of medicine, providing quality health care, and improving the health and well-being of people, families, and communities across the country, call on Congress to reject efforts to ban access to medically necessary gender-affirming care for transgender people.

Health care to treat gender dysphoria is medically necessary, evidence-based care provided to transgender people to alleviate the psychological distress associated with incongruence between an individual's gender and their sex assigned at birth. Gender dysphoria is recognized as a serious medical condition by every major U.S. medical association and the World Health Organization. This health care encompasses mental health counseling, social affirmation (e.g., using a person's chosen name and pronouns), and medical services such as hormone therapy that allow transgender people to live safely and authentically as who they are. Every major medical and mental health association in the U.S., representing more than 1.3 million U.S. doctors,ⁱ supports individualized, age-appropriate gender-affirming care that promotes the health and well-being of transgender people.

A robust body of evidence compiled over the last 50 years has demonstrated that gender-affirming care is safe, effective care that improves the physical health and mental health of transgender people. For example, research has shown that receipt of gender-affirming care among young people (aged 13 to 20) was associated with 60% lower odds of depression and 73% lower odds of suicidality.ⁱⁱ Other studies have found similar positive impactsⁱⁱⁱ on the mental health of transgender and nonbinary youth, including a nearly 40% lower odds of having a suicide attempt in the past year when they have access to gender-affirming hormone therapy.^{iv} For transgender adults, gender-affirming surgeries are associated with reduced rates of suicide attempts, anxiety, depression, and symptoms of gender dysphoria, along with higher levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and quality of life.^v

In the U.S., individualized, age-appropriate care is provided to transgender people by licensed medical professionals according to expert standards of clinical care that have been in place for decades, such as those maintained by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and the Endocrine Society.^{vi} The WPATH Standards, which are in their eighth edition as of September 2022, are based on dozens of independent systematic reviews and a consensus-based expert review process involving more than 100 experts from around the world. These standards ensure that decision-making about health care for transgender people is guided by a multi-disciplinary care team of medical and mental health professionals working together with patients and, for minors, with their parents, to assess and meet the patient’s medical needs. This enables health professionals to help transgender patients navigate safe and effective pathways to care that maximizes their physical and psychological well-being. We stand firmly behind the robust evidence base and expert clinical guidelines that demonstrate this care is safe, effective, and medically necessary for transgender people to thrive.

Recently we have seen a surge of state and federal efforts to eliminate access to medically necessary care for transgender people. Currently, twenty states have enacted legislation banning care for adolescents; five of these bans enact felony penalties against health care professionals for following their professional oath to provide ethical, evidence-based care.^{vii} Increasingly, state officials are also seeking to restrict access to this care for transgender adults.^{viii} These efforts have now made their way to Congress, where federal lawmakers are attempting to ban gender-affirming care through legislative attacks that take many forms^{ix}—standalone bills, harmful amendments to legislation on an array of unrelated topics, or threats to withhold funding from essential programs and services.

We strongly oppose these discriminatory state and federal efforts to ban best-practice, evidence-based care for transgender people. These efforts contradict long-standing expert clinical standards and represent governmental intrusion into the practice of medicine, as well as the privacy and sanctity of the relationship between medical professionals, patients, and parents. We call on Congress to reject these harmful proposals and urge it to leverage its power to protect access to medically necessary gender-affirming care for transgender people across the country.

Thank you for your consideration. If you need any more information, please do not hesitate to contact Kellan Baker, Executive Director and Chief Learning Officer for Whitman-Walker Institute at KBaker@Whitman-Walker.org or Caroline Medina, Director of Policy for Whitman-Walker Institute at CMedina@Whitman-Walker.org.

Respectfully,

ABIM Foundation
American Academy of Physician Associates
American Board of Internal Medicine

American College of Physicians
American Medical Student Association (AMSA)
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anchor Health
Apicha Community Health Center
Be BOLD Psychology and Consulting
Boston Medical Center
Bright Tree Therapy, PLLC
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
Charlotte Trans Health
CHMG Pediatric Specialists
Clear Sky Therapeutic Services, PLLC
Community Love Direct Primary Care, PLLC
Create the Pause Therapy
Create Your Calm PLLC
CrescentCare
The Eidos LGBTQ+ Health Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania
El Rio Community Health Center
Empowered Transitions
Endocrine Society
The Fenway Institute
FOLX Health
Gaia Therapy LLC
Gender Specialist, LLC
Gender Wellness Center, Bassett Healthcare Network
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality
Healing Arts Collaborative
Healing Path Counseling and Wellness PLLC
Horizon Counseling Center
Howard Brown Health
Inner Guidance Counseling PLLC
Intersections, LLC
Julia Springer Therapy

Basil Guyer Therapy
Lyon-Martin Community Health Services
Metamorphosis Medical Center
Mosaic Health and Healing Arts
National Association of Social Workers
North Carolina Psychological Association
NorthLakes Community Clinic
Nourish Adolescent Wellness
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Radical Well-Being Center
Reaching Resolution, LLC
Return to Center Psychotherapy, PLLC
Rooted Therapy
Second Breakfast Nutrition
Shital Patel PLLC
St. Louis Behavioral Medicine Institute
TKC Psychotherapy, PLLC
Transhealth
US Professional Association for Transgender Health (USPATH)
Vada Counseling
Western North Carolina Community Health Services
Whitman-Walker Institute
Whole Being Therapy
Wiconi Counseling Center Utah
Wild Spring Counseling
World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)

Cc: The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

-
- ⁱ The Human Rights Campaign, “Get the Facts on Gender-Affirming Care,” available at <https://www.hrc.org/resources/get-the-facts-on-gender-affirming-care> (last accessed July 7, 2023)
- ⁱⁱ Tordoff, D. M., Wanta, J. W., Collin, A., Stepney, C. S., Inwards-Breland, D. J., & Ahrens, K. (2022). Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(2). doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ramos, G. G. F., Mengai, A. C. S., Daltro, C. A. T., Cutrim, P. T., Zlotnik, E., & Beck, A. P. A. (2021). Systematic Review: Puberty suppression with GnRH analogues in adolescents with gender incongruity. *Journal of Endocrinological Investigation*, 44(6):1151-1158. doi: 10.1007/s40618-020-01449-5
- ^{iv} Green, A. E., DeChants, J. P., Price, M. N., & Davis, C. K. (2021). Association of Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy With Depression, Thoughts of Suicide, and Attempted Suicide Among Transgender and Nonbinary Youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(4). 643 – 649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.10.036>
- ^v Swan, J., Phillips, T. M., Sanders, T., Mullens, A. B., Debattista, J. & Bromdal, A. (2022). Mental health and quality of life outcomes of gender-affirming surgery: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*. DOI: 10.1080/19359705.2021.2016537; Achille, C., Taggart, T., Eaton, N. R., Osipoff, J., Tafuri, K., Lane, A., & Wilson, T. A. (2020). Longitudinal impact of gender-affirming endocrine intervention on the mental health and well-being of transgender youths: preliminary results. *International Journal of Pediatric Endocrinology*, 2020(1), 1-5.
- ^{vi} Coleman, E., Radix, A. E., Bouman, W.P., Brown, G.R., de Vries, A. L. C., Deutsch, M. B., Ettner, R., Fraser, L., Goodman, M., Green, J., Hancock, A. B., Johnson, T. W., Karasic, D. H., Knudson, G. A., Leibowitz, S. F., Meyer-Bahlburg, H. F.L., Monstrey, S. J., Motmans, J., Nahata, L., ... Arcelus, J. (2022). Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 23(S1), S1-S260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644> ; Wylie C Hembree and others, Endocrine Treatment of Gender-Dysphoric/Gender-Incongruent Persons: An Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guideline, *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, Volume 102, Issue 11, 1 November 2017, Pages 3869–3903, <https://doi.org/10.1210/jc.2017-01658>
- ^{vii} Movement Advancement Project. April 2023. *LGBTQ Policy Spotlight: Bans on Medical Care for Transgender People*. <https://www.mapresearch.org/2023-medical-care-bans-report>
- ^{viii} Ibid.
- ^{ix} See, for example: H.R. 3328 – 118th Congress (2023-2024): Protecting Children from Experimentation Act, available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3328?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22Protecting+Children+from+Experimentation+Act%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=2>; H.R. 3887 – 118th Congress (2023-2024): Children’s Hospital Reauthorization Act of 2023, available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3887>; Sec. 8143 of the Full Committee Markup of Fiscal Year 2024 Defense and Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Bills, available at <https://appropriations.house.gov/legislation/markups/markup-fiscal-year-2024-defense-and-energy-and-water-development-and-related>