

**Statement for the Record from Physicians for Reproductive Health**  
**Submitted by Dr. Jamila Perritt, President and CEO**  
**U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**  
**Hearing on "Protecting Our Children: Exposing the Dangers of Irreversible Gender**  
**Transition Procedures on Minors" – June 3, 2026**

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Committee:

Physicians for Reproductive Health (PRH) is a physician-led national organization that mobilizes and organizes medical providers to advance sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice. PRH has a network of over 550 physician advocates across the country, including physicians who provide gender-affirming health care. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on the evidence, safety, and necessity of gender-affirming health care for young people.

PRH's programs combine education, advocacy, and strategic communications to ensure access to equitable, comprehensive health care, including gender-affirming health care. We believe this work is necessary to ensure all people can live freely with dignity, safety, and security. We work towards collective liberation and believe that health care is a fundamental human right.

Gender-affirming care involves a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions that help transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people align various aspects of their lives with their gender identity.<sup>1</sup> Gender-affirming health care is affirming care obtained with the help of health professionals. Gender-affirming health care is a part of comprehensive primary care that includes supportive behavioral health care, gender-affirming hormones, puberty blockers, surgical interventions, and other medical procedures.<sup>2</sup> Gender-affirming care is often willfully misconstrued and misrepresented, but gender-affirming care is essential and life-saving care that serves as a foundation in the lives that trans people lead, including trans youth.

Any restriction on gender-affirming health care does not protect young people. Instead, restrictions bypass a physician's best medical judgment and deny young people access to the full range of the quality, compassionate health care they deserve.

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Boyle, *What Is Gender-Affirming Care? Your Questions Answered*, ASS'N AM. MED. COLL. (Apr. 12, 2022), <https://www.aamc.org/news/what-gender-affirming-care-your-questions-answered>.

<sup>2</sup> AM. ACAD. FAMILY PHYSICIANS, *Care for the Transgender and Gender Nonbinary Patient*, (Nov. 18, 2020), <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/transgender-nonbinary.html#:~:text=Gender%2Daffirming%20health%20care%20is,removal%2C%20and%20other%20medical%20procedures>.

**I. Gender-Affirming Health Care is Safe, Evidence-Based, and Life-Saving Care; Everyone Regardless of Age Deserves Access to This Care.**

Gender-affirming health care is safe, evidence-based, life-saving health care that allows transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse individuals to live authentic lives. Major medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Endocrine Society, Pediatric Endocrine Society and World Professional Association for Transgender Health, support gender-affirming health care for trans people.<sup>3</sup> Actions to restrict and ban gender-affirming health care ignore the significant body of research, clinical best practices, and the well-being of patients.

The care available to trans youth is evidence-based and supported by a sizeable body of research, drawing from a variety of study designs and methodologies that demonstrate its safety and effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> Critics of gender-affirming health care often argue that studies assessing the impact on youth are flawed or insufficient, pointing to an absence of double-blind randomized control trials for treatments like puberty blockers.<sup>5</sup> It is inaccurate and misleading to state that the research is lacking. In every area of medicine, clinical care is determined by a variety of factors including scientific evidence and the benefits and harms of both the treatment and its alternatives. Physicians consider physical, mental, and quality of life outcomes. The evidence supporting this care is well established and continues to grow. The gender-affirming health care provided to young people is grounded in decades of peer-reviewed research and longstanding clinical experience. Within leading pediatric medical centers, gender-affirming health care is neither novel nor controversial, but rather an established component of evidence-based care.<sup>6</sup>

Substantial evidence shows that access to gender-affirming health care improves mental health outcomes for trans youth. A recent study by The Trevor Project found that transgender and nonbinary youth who reported being unable to access hormones to support their gender transition or expression were nearly twice as likely to report a past-year suicide attempt

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<sup>3</sup> GLAAD, *Medical Association Statements in Support of Health Care for Transgender People and Youth*, (June 26, 2024) <https://glaad.org/medical-association-statements-supporting-trans-youth-healthcare-and-against-discriminatory>

<sup>4</sup> Brief for American Psychological Association as Amici Curae Supporting Petitioner at 20—21, *U.S. v. Skremetti*, 605 U.S. 495 (2025) (No. 23-477) [hereinafter APA Brief].

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Dep't Health & Hum. Servs., *Treatment for Pediatric Gender Dysphoria: Review of Evidence and Best Practices*, Nov. 2025.

<sup>6</sup> GLAAD, *supra* note 3.

compared to those who were currently taking hormones.<sup>7</sup> This finding is consistent with a growing body of peer-reviewed research linking anti-trans policies to worsening mental health outcomes.<sup>8</sup> As discussed in the section below, rates of depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation among the trans community are much higher than the general population.<sup>9</sup> One meaningful part of protecting trans people and youth is ensuring access to the care that affirms them and protects their mental and physical well-being.

Withholding gender-affirming health care from young people is cruel, unnecessary, and not grounded in medical evidence. When the research demonstrates that trans youth benefit from gender-affirming health care, policy efforts to restrict care can be interpreted as ideological or political motivations with significant implications for bodily autonomy. All people, regardless of age, should have access to the health care that they want and need. Young people can make their own health care decisions. When young people access gender-affirming health care, there are already safeguards and protocols in place to support them in making informed decisions. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health and The Endocrine Society have guidelines through their Standards of Care for gender-affirming health care providers. Patients under eighteen can only receive gender-affirming health care after the patient and their family is counseled and informed consent is given. Providers following these ethical guidelines are obligated to facilitate and encourage family support and involvement.

## **II. Eliminating Access to Gender-Affirming Health Care Harms Transgender Youth and Their Families**

When trans youth receive gender-affirming health care to treat gender dysphoria<sup>10</sup> they experience significant improvements in overall mental health and well-being. The opposite is

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<sup>7</sup> See 2025 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People, TREVOR PROJECT (May 6, 2026), <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2025/>.

<sup>8</sup> Erin Reed, *Trans Youth Who Want Hormone Therapy But Can't Get It Face Twice Suicide Risk, Says National Survey*, ERIN IN THE MORNING (May 7, 2026), [https://www.erininthemorning.com/p/trans-youth-who-want-hormone-therapy?utm\\_source=post-email-title&publication\\_id=994764&post\\_id=196800642&utm\\_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=55y6x3&triedRedirect=true&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.erininthemorning.com/p/trans-youth-who-want-hormone-therapy?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=994764&post_id=196800642&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=55y6x3&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email).

<sup>9</sup> See Christal Achille et al., *Longitudinal Impact of Gender-Affirming Endocrine Intervention on the Mental Health and Well-Being of Transgender Youths: Preliminary Results*, INT'L J. PEDIATRIC ENDOCRINOLOGY (2020); Terryann C. Clark et al., *THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF TRANSGENDER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: RESULTS FROM THE NEW ZEALAND ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY*, 55 J. ADOLESCENT HEALTH 93 (2014).

<sup>10</sup> Gender dysphoria is the medical diagnosis for the distress someone experiences related to the difference between the gender they are thought to be at birth and the gender they know themselves to be. Gender dysphoria can often be relieved by expressing one's gender in a way that makes the individual comfortable. The widely accepted view of the professional medical community is that gender-affirming health care is the appropriate treatment for gender dysphoria. See *Frequently Asked Questions about Transgender People*,

true when trans youth are denied or forced to delay gender-affirming health care. Denying young people access to care that is designed to relieve suffering exacerbates physical, mental, and social harm and has long term negative consequences.<sup>11</sup> Delayed access to care due to social or legal barriers for trans individuals is reported as causing highly negative effects on well-being. A recent study found that transgender youth who receive gender-affirming health care are 60% less likely to be depressed and 73% less likely to have thoughts of suicide or self-harm compared to those who do not receive care.<sup>12</sup> Alarming, this same study revealed that youth who are not able to access care experience a two-to-threefold increase in depression and suicidal thoughts. This indicates that delaying or denying hormones and puberty blockers may in fact worsen mental health symptoms.

It is important to note, that the mental health symptoms transgender individuals experience are not caused by having a transgender identity. Untreated or undiagnosed gender dysphoria can cause significant distress for transgender individuals, including young people. This is exacerbated by the fact that many transgender adults and youth live in a society that tells them that their deeply held identity is wrong. These experiences can lead to anxiety disorders, depression, and other mental health conditions.<sup>13</sup> Access to quality and competent gender-affirming health care can relieve individuals struggling with these conditions because gender-affirming health care connects patients to mental health professionals.

The harm that patients experience often extends to their families. The vast majority of parents support their trans children and are involved in navigating the health care and legal process with their child's transition.<sup>14</sup> Often the greatest challenge for families and their gender diverse

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ADVOCATES TRANS EQUALITY <https://transequality.org/issues/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-transgender-people> (last visited May 18, 2026).

<sup>11</sup> See e.g., Lauren Porsch-Ortega & Sara Birnel Henderson, *The Harmful Effects of Legislative Restrictions on Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy in Florida and Missouri: Challenges for Patients and Providers*, 20 PLOS ONE 7 (2025) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12286317/>; Yasemin Smallens, "They're Ruining People's Lives:" *Bans on Gender-Affirming Care for Transgender Youth in the US*, HUM. RTS. WATCH (June 3, 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/06/03/theyre-ruining-peoples-lives/bans-on-gender-affirming-care-for-transgender-youth> [hereinafter HRW Report]

<sup>12</sup> See Diana M. Tordoff et al., *Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care*, JAMA (Feb. 25, 2022), [https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789423?utm\\_source=For\\_The\\_Media&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=ftm\\_links&utm\\_term=022522](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789423?utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_term=022522).

<sup>13</sup> Advocates Trans Equality, *supra* note 10.

<sup>14</sup> Jarred Keller, *New HRC Foundation Report Finds that More than 90% of Parents are Supportive of Their Child's Trans Identity, but More Than Half of Trans Children Suffer From Mental Health Challenges and Bullying at School*, HUM. RTS. CAMPAIGN (Oct. 3, 2024), <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/new-hrc-foundation-report-finds-that-more-than-90-of-parents-are-supportive-of-their-childs-trans-identity-but-more-than-half-of-trans-children-suffer-from-mental-health-challenges-and-bullying-at-school>

children is overcoming the barriers to care imposed by hostile states—and increasingly, the federal government. In early 2025, the Trump Administration issued sweeping executive orders targeting transgender rights, including an order that attempts to restrict access to gender-affirming care for youth. These actions and the subsequent federal actions (such as the Kennedy Declaration and the proposed rules from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services blocking funding for gender-affirming health care) shifted the national landscape for transgender rights.<sup>15</sup> More than 40 hospitals nationwide have paused or ceased to offer some type of gender-affirming health care to young people since the administration's first executive order.<sup>16</sup> Suddenly young people who were receiving care were cut off. Families and patients reported significant distress when their care was disrupted or blocked due to bans.<sup>17</sup> Families who travel out of state to receive care face significant geographic and financial burdens, as well as a toll on mental and physical health.<sup>18</sup>

### **III. The Impact of Gender-Affirming Health Care Restrictions on Physicians and Health Systems**

The extensive evidence of safety, efficacy, and need for gender-affirming health care is reinforced by the experiences of the physicians who provide this care. Like many who work in health care, gender-affirming health care providers are guided not just by clinical best practice and evidence based research, but also by deeply held values and beliefs about patient autonomy and dignity.<sup>19</sup> When federal and state actors intervene to stop this care, they interrupt the trusted relationship between patient and physician. One gender-affirming care provider in Washington State speaks about the care they provide:

Research has demonstrated that gender affirming care – for both adults and youth – is medically necessary and lifesaving. When trans youth are trusted, believed, loved, and affirmed by their families and healthcare providers, their mental health outcomes start mirroring their cisgender peers. Without this respect

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<sup>15</sup> See Erin Reed, Federal Judge Rules Trump Government Has Animus Towards Trans People, Blocks Org Subpoenas, *Erin in The Morning* (May 8, 2026), [https://www.erininthemorning.com/p/federal-judge-rules-trump-government?utm\\_source=post-email-title&publication\\_id=994764&post\\_id=196927347&utm\\_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=55y6x3&triedRedirect=true&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.erininthemorning.com/p/federal-judge-rules-trump-government?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=994764&post_id=196927347&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=55y6x3&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email).

<sup>16</sup> Theresa Gaffney, *Amid Federal Pressure, More Hospitals Stop Gender-Affirming Care for Minors*, *STATE NEWS* (Feb. 5, 2026), <https://www.statnews.com/2026/02/05/hospitals-stop-gender-care-minors-trump-administration-pressure/>.

<sup>17</sup> HRW Report, *supra* note 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> See Ahona Shirin et al., *Providers' Beliefs and Values: Understanding Their Approach to Gender-Affirming Care*, 16 *J. Primary Care Community Health* (2025), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11700393/>.

and care, we see higher rates of depression, substance abuse, and death by suicide. I do not understand how anyone could think that a targeted assault on the bodies and self-worth of children is good for kids, families, or anyone else.<sup>20</sup>

Just as abortion bans have significant and negative effects on the reproductive and maternal health care workforce, gender-affirming care bans will cause similar negative impacts on the health care workforce. One study found over three-quarters (79%) of gender-affirming health care providers spent more time worrying about the health and well-being of their patients due to increases in anti-trans legislation.<sup>21</sup> Sixty-five percent said that they spent more time worrying about the health and well-being of their more vulnerable colleagues, for example, their transgender coworkers.<sup>22</sup> Across the country, health care providers and health systems are under-resourced. Bans on gender-affirming care exacerbate this strain on the health care system writ large. A physician in California warns of the risk that pushing gender-affirming care for youth out of hospitals poses:

If gender-affirming care gets pushed out of big institutions that have the resources to do the intensive service provision that some trans youth need and this health care gets pushed into small standalone clinics that do not have the resources to provide the level of care some trans youth need, it will be of great detriment to some trans youth. They will not get the health care they need. Also, it will also be of detriment to everyone the stand alone clinics serve, not just trans youth, because they will be stretched too thin.<sup>23</sup>

The previous section highlighted the disruptive harm to patients when gender-affirming health care is restricted. Physicians experience similar disruption when the care that they specialize in is disrupted by political actors. Bans and restrictions on gender-affirming health care are frequently written and rolled out with unclear guidance that circumvents medical expertise. Further, legal battles pause and then reinstate these bans without warning, thus forcing clinics to either turn away patients or limit their services even before bans were upheld or struck down by

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<sup>20</sup> Physicians for Reproductive Health et al., Comment on Proposed Rule Hospital Condition of Participation: Prohibiting Sex-Rejecting Procedures for Children (Feb. 17, 2026). [hereinafter PRH Comment]

<sup>21</sup> See Abbie E. Goldberg et al., *The Experiences of Gender-Affirming Care Providers in States Without Laws Restricting Access to Care*, Williams Institute (Apr. 2025), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/experiences-gac-providers/>.

<sup>22</sup> See *id.*

<sup>23</sup> PRH Comment, *supra* note 20.

courts.<sup>24</sup> This harm is magnified when bans and restrictions on gender-affirming care seek to criminalize providers.

Policies that criminalize providing gender-affirming health care for young people not only stops essential care but creates environments that intensify health disparities.<sup>25</sup> Criminalization is antithetical to care, yet attacks on autonomy continue to escalate. Six states classify the provision of gender-affirming care for young people as a felony offense.<sup>26</sup> In 2025, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1399 – a bill that would have criminalized the provision of gender-affirming health care for transgender people under 18 and subject providers to fines and up to ten years in prison.<sup>27</sup> While this bill did not become law, it shows the dangerous intent to criminalize evidence-based care. Many of these laws have led to “overcompliance,” where providers restrict more care than may be legally required out of fear of legal repercussions—even in states where care is not banned or restricted.<sup>28</sup> Threatening physicians’ ability to serve their patients to the highest standard of care with fear of criminalization places them in a compromising position. Now, abiding by the law forces physicians to abandon their personal and professional values.

Physicians caring for trans youth experience high levels of moral distress due to legal and policy constraints. Existing research shows that gender-affirming health care restrictions and bans similarly have a negative impact on the range of providers who provide gender-affirming care to youth, including family medicine physicians, pediatric endocrinologists, mental health specialists, and adolescent mental health providers, which in turn has a downstream effect on all patients who access care, not just transgender patients.<sup>29</sup>

A physician in California shares why restrictions on gender-affirming health care undermine health care for all patients and for the profession as a whole:

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<sup>24</sup> HRW Report, *supra* note 11.

<sup>25</sup> Catherine Schaefer et al., *Discriminatory Transgender Health Bills Have Critical Consequences for Youth*, CHILD TRENDS (Apr. 21, 2022), <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/discriminatory-transgender-health-bills-have-critical-consequences-for-youth>.

<sup>26</sup> *Bans on Best Practice Medical Care for Transgender Youth*, MOVEMENT ADVANCEMENT PROJECT <https://mapresearch.org/equality-map/bans-on-best-practice-medical-care-for-transgender-youth/> (last visited May 18, 2026).

<sup>27</sup> *ACLU Condemns House Passage of Bill to Criminalize Transgender Health Care*, ACLU <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-condemns-house-passage-of-bill-to-criminalize-transgender-health-care> (last visited May 18, 2026).

<sup>28</sup> HRW Report, *supra* note 11.

<sup>29</sup> Aynsley H. M. Scheffert & Veronica L. Timbers, *The Impact of Restrictive Legislation on Gender-Affirming Care Providers In The United States: A National Survey*, SEXUALITY RESEARCH & SOCIAL POLICY (2025) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13178-025-01177-6>.

[Bans and restrictions set] an incredibly dangerous precedent for the federal government to decide what care is counted as health care at all instead of our profession. They could next decide infertility care doesn't fall under health care and any hospitals providing fertility care should not receive funding. They could decide contraceptive care isn't health care and prohibit any hospital that discusses and prescribes birth control from getting federal money. The government should not be deciding what is health care and shutting down health care for vulnerable populations.<sup>30</sup>

Physicians should be able to spend their time and energy providing best practice medical care to their patients, not worrying about political interests overriding their professional judgment. Policies that ban or restrict gender-affirming health care for trans youth destabilize the broader pediatric health care system, reduce provider availability, and limit high-quality care for all youth and families.

### **Conclusion**

Gender-affirming health care is essential health care that young people and adults rely on. Physicians know delivering this care is in line with evidence-based standards of care and ethical principles of medicine. For the foregoing reasons, we urge the Committee and Congress to protect access to gender-affirming health care, regardless of age. If you require any additional information, please reach out to Natasha Rappazzo, If/When/How Reproductive Justice Fellow, [nrappazzo@prh.org](mailto:nrappazzo@prh.org).

Sincerely,

Dr. Jamila Perritt, MD, MPH, FACOG  
President and CEO  
Physicians for Reproductive Health

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<sup>30</sup> PRH Comment, *supra* note 20.