

Transgender Healthcare Policy in the United States

By Aiden Budinski

Introduction

For my research, I looked at policies that impacted access to healthcare for transgender patients, specifically regarding access to hormone therapy, mental health services, and sex reassignment surgery (SRS). My research question looks at how transgender healthcare policies have shifted during the Trump Administration and suggests policies that could be enacted to protect this vulnerable group. Throughout the United States, transgender healthcare has been a contested subject. Moreover, recent legislation in several states aims to reduce access to gender-reaffirming healthcare for transgender individuals. The target population that I focused on is transgender individuals in the United States. I focused on this target population because it is not only a topic that affects me personally, but also, I think this is an important topic to address given the slew on anti-transgender legislation that has been gaining traction recently. Additionally, this research is important because gender-reaffirming healthcare is necessary to transgender individuals, and yet it is becoming increasingly harder to access in the United States, which puts transgender individuals at risk. According to research done in 2008 by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 19% of transgender respondents reported being denied healthcare by a medical provider because of their gender identity (Stroumsa, 2014). Additionally, 28% of respondents reported verbal harassment in a medical setting (Stroumsa, 2014). As a vulnerable group, it is important to examine the policies that have been put forward to prevent transgender individuals from accessing necessary medical care.

Sources:

- Cole, D. (2021). Arkansas becomes the first state to outlaw gender affirming healthcare for trans youth. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/06/politics/arkansas-transgender-health-care-veto-override/index.html>.
- Dickey, L. M. & Budge, S. L. (2020) Suicide and the transgender experience: a public health crisis. American Psychologist, 75(3), 380-390. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000619>.
- Lopez, C. (2021). Texas lawmakers proposed a bill to separate trans children from their families. Insider. <https://www.insider.com/texas-lawmakers-propose-bill-to-label-trans-health-care-child-abuse-2021-4>.
- Simmons-Duffin, S. (2020). Transgender health protections reversed by the Trump administration. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/06/12/868073068/transgender-health-protections-reversed-by-trump-administration>
- Stroumsa D. (2014). The state of transgender health care: policy, law, and medical frameworks. American Journal of Public Health, 104(3), e31–e38. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301789>

Current Policy Changes Against Transgender Healthcare

During the Trump Administration, healthcare protections for transgender individuals were reversed. According to NPR, the Trump Administration rolled back “sex discrimination” policies that protected transgender individuals in the healthcare field (Simmons-Duffin, 2020). This national policy made it legal for healthcare providers to discriminate against transgender individuals on the basis on sex by only protecting cisgender males and females from discrimination (Simmons-Duffin, 2020). Although the Trump Administration is no longer in power, the Republican Party is continuing to target transgender healthcare throughout the United States. For example, Arkansas became the first state to outlaw gender-affirming healthcare for transgender youth (Cole, 2021). This means that transgender individuals under the age of 18 cannot access necessary healthcare, like puberty-blockers (Cole, 2021). This is significant because it has been shown that access to healthcare for transgender youth is important for reducing instances of suicide, self-harm, and other mental health issues (Dickey & Budge, 2020). Other states throughout the United States are considering similar legislation to prevent transgender individuals, particularly minors, from accessing gender-affirming healthcare. Currently, Texas lawmakers are voting on legislation that would make it illegal for families to support their child’s transition and would label parents who support their children’s transitions as “child abuse” (Lopez, 2021).

Suggestions for Policies to Protect Healthcare for Transgender Individuals

The Biden Administration can reinstate federal legislation that would protect transgender individuals from discrimination and allow them to access gender-affirming healthcare. Without federal protections, states will continue to propose laws that restrict transgender peoples’ access to healthcare and ultimately hurt transgender people. Additionally, holding insurance companies accountable and requiring them to cover transgender healthcare will help solve this issue. This can also be done through federal legislation. Ultimately, the only policies that can help ensure that transgender people can access the healthcare that they need exists on the federal level and must be enacted nationwide.



Image from: <https://mlp.org/is-transgender-flag-day-a-real-thing/>