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Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/26/oklahoma-wants-make-gender-affirming-care-crime>

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Across the US, State Lawmakers Renew Attacks on Transgender Kids

ryanthoreson

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Oklahoma lawmakers have introduced [a new bill that would make it a felony](#) to provide gender-affirming medical treatment, other than counseling, to anyone under the age of 21. Such treatment can alleviate gender dysphoria and postpone puberty to give children time to explore their gender identity. The bill would punish doctors, parents, and even children themselves with penalties of up to life imprisonment.

Oklahoma's bill is extreme, taking autonomy away from young adults and imposing draconian punishments, and is part of a worrying larger trend. Across the US, state lawmakers are [once again introducing a slew of bills](#) that seek to block transgender children from accessing healthcare, sports, and support in schools.

This seemingly [coordinated assault on transgender kids](#) flies in the face of what medical professionals, parents, and transgender kids say they need. Studies show that [transgender kids can reap huge benefits](#) from being able to socially transition that is, to have others treat them in a manner consistent with their gender identity. Bills that shut transgender kids out of sports or bar teachers from respecting their gender identity fly in the face of transgender children's rights and well-being.

It's equally misguided to restrict medical interventions for transgender or gender non-conforming kids, which are fairly rare. The most common treatment is puberty blockers, which delay the onset of puberty and [can alleviate the anxiety and distress](#) that young transgender people might otherwise experience as their body develops. Professional organizations, including the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), support this treatment for some children, allowing them to further explore their gender identity while suspending physiological changes that can be difficult or impossible to reverse later in life.

Unfortunately, lawmakers have used sensationalistic arguments about irreversible genital surgeries as an excuse to ban any kind of transition-related care. This ignores that the World Professional Association for Transgender Health does not recommend genital surgeries [for minors](#), and they virtually never occur.

Whether puberty blockers or steps toward medical transition are appropriate for a given child is a deeply personal determination. For kids who need them, foreclosing these options is a violation of their bodily autonomy and their right to health.

Lawmakers in Oklahoma and elsewhere should roundly reject this bill, and others like it, and instead turn their attention to the real crises affecting trans kids, such as [discrimination](#), [bullying](#), and [suicide](#).

Violence and the Human Rights of Transgender People in the United States

The Human Rights Consequences of Parental Notice of Abortion in Illinois

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