



Remaining Vigilant

Michael Schuenemeyer
Team Leader, Health and Wholeness Advocacy Ministries

In their first month, the Biden-Harris administration has issued a broad range of executive orders to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination. These federal protections are a boost in the movement for justice and equality, however, they should not lull us into complacency. There is much work yet to be done: not only for Congress to pass the [Equality Act](#), securing consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ, but also to fight [anti-LGBTQ legislation](#) that has been introduced in the current legislative sessions of half the states in this country.

A particularly pernicious trend among the state legislative bills introduced is the plethora of [anti-transgender/non-binary bills](#). These bills seek to ban transgender girls and women from participating in sports and to deny life-affirming treatment options for transgender and non-binary children, youth, and young adults. Some state bills would criminalize parents who support gender-affirming treatment for their transgender and gender-diverse children.

When elected officials legislate against you, it is harmful and stigmatizing. The legislative efforts to ban evidence-based care for transgender and gender-diverse youth are in direct opposition to recommendations from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), which declared in a [November 2019 statement](#) that it “strongly opposes any efforts – legal, legislative, and otherwise – to block access to these recognized interventions. Blocking access to timely care has been shown to increase youths’ risk for suicidal ideation and other negative mental health outcomes.”

The AACAP statement is consistent with the [2018 policy statement](#) issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which clearly states that the best outcomes for transgender and non-binary youth happen “when parents and medical care teams are able to support youth with access to comprehensive, gender-affirming, and developmentally appropriate health care that is provided in a safe and inclusive clinical space.” The current wave of legislative bills not only reduce the

care options for transgender and gender-diverse children and adolescents but also impose a mental health burden, leading many to experience depression and suicidal ideation. It is an abuse of power for elected officials to pursue policies that place such obstacles in the way of families in their efforts to provide care and support to their children.

As a person of the Christian faith, I am called to love my neighbor, to honor the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and to do no harm. Transgender and non-binary persons are beloved by God, and I trust the words of the psalmist who affirms that each of us is awesomely and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). I cannot be silent or complacent when those who may be different from me are harmed by policies of fear and ignorance. We must remain alert to these harmful pieces of legislation. We need to let our elected officials know that these bills are unfair and unjust. It is vital that we engage in education about state, local and federal legislative efforts, and center the experiences of transgender and non-binary persons in our resistance to bigotry.

I applaud the Biden-Harris administration for the executive orders addressing discrimination against our LGBTQ community, I encourage Congress to quickly pass the Equality Act, and I implore each of us to remain vigilant against the anti-LGBTQ legislation in our state legislatures, especially the anti-transgender and non-binary bills.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Schuenemeyer is the Team Leader for Health and Wholeness Advocacy Ministries.

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