

Anti-trans bills threaten youth in many states

written by Greg Butterfield
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High school students joined a Protect Trans Kids rally in Sioux Falls, South Dakota,

on Jan. 16 to protest legislation that would ban trans kids from sports programs and restrict bathroom access in schools. Actions were held in six cities across the state.

Struggle-La Lucha spoke with activist Erin Reed (she/her) about anti-trans measures currently flooding state legislatures, and how people are fighting back.

Struggle-La Lucha: Can you tell our readers a bit about who you are and your work for trans rights?

Erin Reed: I have been a longtime advocate for transgender rights, especially when it comes to accessibility of trans health care. I created the [largest map of informed consent hormone therapy clinics in the United States](#). Informed consent is a method of obtaining hormone therapy that does not require years of expensive therapy to obtain hormones. Instead doctors tell you the risks and benefits, letting you make the choice if it is right for you. They then monitor your hormone levels and aid in your transition. This resource has been accessed over 1.6 million times.

I also have been extremely active in marginalized spaces which include transgender people. I created [Maryland Equity Vaccine Hunters](#), which ultimately obtained nearly 10,000 vaccines for Marylanders in underprivileged communities, including transgender Marylanders and especially trans people of color.

Lastly, I openly advocate for transgender legal rights and have been tracking bills this cycle that seek to detransition trans youth, remove transgender people from public spaces like bathrooms and changing rooms, remove the ability of transgender people to update legal documents, and call those who affirm trans youth child abusers.

SLL: Can you give us an overview of the current anti-trans legislation?

ER: As of right now, multiple trackers exist showing dozens of anti-trans bills pending. The ACLU says [79 anti-transgender bills](#) have been filed so far in the first

month of 2022. [Step Up](#) lists 65 active anti-trans bills being proposed.

These bills all share very similar language. Many go after those who provide trans teenagers with transition-related medical care, threatening prison sentences for doctors or defining parents as child abusers. Others seek to ban changes to identification documents. Some propose banning transgender people from bathrooms. Others will ban transgender people from competing in sports, even youth sports and even for youth transitioners.

Many of these bills have no enforcement mechanisms or outrageous enforcement mechanisms like genital inspections. They all will increase harm to the transgender community.

SLL: For you, what is most dangerous about these attacks on trans rights, especially for youth?

ER: Youth are at an enormously high risk of suicide when denied the ability to transition. Most statistics show that transgender people are at a 41% likelihood of [attempting suicide at some point in their life](#).

However, being able to access gender-affirming care lowers transgender youth's chance of [suicide attempts by 40%](#), according to an article published in the Journal of Adolescent Health in December 2021. This makes transition-related care for trans youth one of the most lifesaving treatments you can give to someone under the age of 18.

That several states are looking to ban transition care should terrify many people. So many trans youth will be stuck in these states and withdrawn from their hormone therapy should the bills pass.

SLL: How are trans people fighting back in different states, and how can others get involved?

ER: Local organizations are best — every state usually has its own local LGBTQ organizations that mobilize when an anti-trans bill takes effect. There have been some particularly effective national organizations. Lambda Legal, Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, Transgender Law Center and the ACLU have been essential in challenging these bills and organizing advocacy. If you live in one of the states in the ACLU or Step Up's tracker, contact your representatives about these bills and show up for the hearings.

Sometimes trans youth as young as 11 are the ones that show up and make all the difference. [Kai Shappely](#) stood in front of Texas legislators and was essential to defeating anti-trans youth bills. She is now a finalist for [Time Kid of the Year](#).

SLL: Reproductive rights and Black people's voting rights are also under threat in many of the same states. Can you talk about the importance of building unity among all the communities under attack?

ER: Solidarity among all communities under attack is extremely important. Reproductive rights are intricately tied to transgender rights – anti-abortion laws are inseparable from anti-trans laws and represent an attack designed to enforce a gender hierarchy that reduces our gender and sexuality to a biological role of reproduction and control of our bodies. The same organizations that fight against abortion rights fight against trans rights and [fund anti-trans organizations around the globe](#).

You can't separate either of these from attacks on the Black community. Bills targeting trans youth in sports often get brought up when Black athletes perform well, regardless of if they are trans. In 2021, three cisgender women were banned from the Olympics in some sports categories for not taking birth control to lower their natural testosterone because of trans panic: Castor Semenya, Christine Mboma and Beatrice Masilingi.

And the latest attacks on education in the United States banning books often target “critical race theory” and “gender theory.” Both transness and Blackness are seen as dangerous and are constantly under attack by a white patriarchal society.

