"This Could Mean Death for My Child": Parent Perspectives on Laws Banning Gender-affirming Care for Transgender Adolescents

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Numerous U.S. state legislatures have proposed bills to ban gender-affirming medical interventions for minors. Parents and caregivers play a critical role in advocating for and supporting their transgender and gender-diverse youth (TGDY). We aimed to understand parent and caregiver perspectives about this potential legislation and perceived effects on their TGDY's mental health. We developed and launched a social-media based, anonymous online survey in February 2020 to assess parent and caregiver perspectives on proposed laws to ban gender-affirming medical interventions for minors. Participants were asked to respond to two open-ended questions about these laws; responses were coded to identify key themes. We analyzed responses from 273 participants from 43 states. Most identified as white (86.4%) female (90.0%) mothers (93.8%), and 83.6% of their TGDY had received gender-affirming medical interventions before age 18 years. The most salient theme, which appeared in the majority of responses, described parent and caregiver fears that these laws would lead to worsening mental health and suicide for their TGDY. Additional themes included a fear that their TGDY would face increased discrimination, lose access to gender-affirming medical interventions, and lose autonomy over medical decision-making due to government overreach. In this convenience sample, parents and caregivers overwhelmingly expressed fear that the proposed legislation will lead to worsening mental health and increased suicidal ideation for their TGDY. They implored lawmakers to hear their stories and to leave critical decisions about gender-affirming medical interventions to families and their medical providers.

Journal:

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