"These Laws will be Devastating": Provider Perspectives on Legislation Banning Gender-affirming Care for Transgender Adolescents

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The standards of care for transgender and gender diverse youth (TGDY) experiencing gender dysphoria are well-established and include gender-affirming medical interventions. As of July 2021, 22 states have introduced or passed legislation that bans the provision of gender-affirming medical care to anyone under the age of 18 even with parent or guardian consent. The purpose of this study is to understand what providers who deliver gender-affirming medical care to TGDY think about this legislation. In March 2021, we recruited participants via listservs known to be frequented by providers of gender-affirming medical care. Eligible participants were over the age of 18, currently working as a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant, and providing gender-affirming care to TGDY under the age of 18 in the U.S. We analyzed the responses of 103 providers from all 50 states and DC. Most participants identified as white (77%), cisgender women (70%), specializing in pediatric care (52%). The most salient theme, described by nearly all participants, was the fear that legislation banning gender-affirming care would lead to worsening mental health including increased risk for suicides among TGDY. Other themes included the politicization of medical care, legislation that defies the current standards of care for TGDY, worsening discrimination toward TGDY, and adverse effects on the providers. Providers of gender-affirming care overwhelmingly opposed legislation that bans gender-affirming care for TGDY citing the severe consequences to the health and well-being of TGDY along with the need to practice evidence-based medicine without fear.

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