



# Hogg Foundation *for Mental Health*

## **Senate State Affairs – April 12, 2021** **SB 1646 (Perry) – Transgender Youth Services**

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Transgender children and youth are at risk for serious mental health conditions including suicide, substance use, anxiety, and depression.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the medical and psychological impact of living with this experience, many of these youth are bullied, discriminated against, isolated, and abused. These children and youth need compassionate care from educated health professionals including doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and others. The care of and support for these children and their parents should be guided by evidence-based health care, and not legislated. Their mental health should be paramount.

Without compassionate care, mental health issues for these children and youth can result in struggles in school, substance use as a means to self-medicate, psychiatric inpatient care, and death by suicide. Our legislative efforts should be on supporting research that will best help these children be healthy and happy. Our focus needs to be not only on the physical health aspects, but also on the mental health of the child and family. Medical and mental health professionals should not have to fear criminality when supporting transgender children/youth and their families. These children/youth and their families are typically already suffering from stigma, discrimination, and lack of acceptance in society. We know that compassionate gender-affirming care reduces the suicide rate for this population significantly.<sup>2</sup> Preventing adequate medical and psychological care and support with the threat of legal action against providers will only make the journey riskier and more painful for children, youth, and families.

Medical, psychological, and psychiatric associations in Texas and nationally support evidenced-based transgender care for youth.<sup>3,4,5</sup> This typically involves social transitioning, not medical or surgical treatment. These supports alone have been shown to reduce suicide rates in transgender youth.<sup>6</sup> If health care professionals have to risk their licensure in order to provide compassionate evidenced-based care, vulnerable children and their families will be left to navigate complex territory alone.

Limiting the ability of health care professionals to provide care as deemed medically and psychologically appropriate, puts the lives of these children and youth at risk. The foundation believes that there is much in our state that needs legislative intervention, however, the care of these children and youth is best determined outside of the legislative arena by those intimately involved in the child's care and those with the professional training, skill, and expertise to offer evidenced-based care.

Submitted by Colleen Horton, MPAff | Director of Policy | [colleen.horton@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:colleen.horton@austin.utexas.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> Johns M, Lowry R, Andrzejewski J, et al. Transgender identity and experiences of violence victimization, substance use, suicide risk, and sexual risk behaviors among high school students—19 states and large urban school districts, 2017. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2019;68(3):67-71.

<sup>2</sup> Turban JL, King D, Carswell JM, Keuroghlian AS. Pubertal Suppression for Transgender Youth and Risk of Suicidal Ideation. *Pediatrics.* Feb 2020;145(2)doi:10.1542/peds.2019-1725

<sup>3</sup> Care for the Transgender and Gender Nonbinary Patient. American Academy of Family Physicians. 2020. <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/transgender-nonbinary.html>. Accessed March 26, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People. American Psychological Association. *American Psychologist*, December 2015. Vol. 70, No. 9, 832–864 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039906>

<sup>5</sup> Practice Parameter on Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Sexual Orientation, Gender Nonconformity, and Gender Discordance in Children and Adolescent. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. 2012. [https://jaacap.org/article/S0890-8567\(12\)00500-X/fulltext](https://jaacap.org/article/S0890-8567(12)00500-X/fulltext). Accessed on March 26, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Practice Parameter on Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Sexual Orientation, Gender Nonconformity, and Gender Discordance in Children and Adolescent. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. 2012. [https://jaacap.org/article/S0890-8567\(12\)00500-X/fulltext](https://jaacap.org/article/S0890-8567(12)00500-X/fulltext). Accessed on March 26, 2020.