

Letter Opposing H3477 from South Carolina Medical Providers

South Carolina General Assembly,

As medical professionals serving South Carolinians, we have an obligation to advocate for the health of all of our patients and oppose discrimination. That's why we urge you to reject any legislation targeting transgender young people for discrimination.

A bill to restrict transgender students from playing on school sports teams, H3477, is particularly concerning.

Participation in athletics is a vital part of students' well-being, including their physical, social, and emotional health; involvement in student sports provides young people with lessons about leadership, self-discipline, success, and failure. Transgender students, like other students, deserve the same chances to learn teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership and self-discipline, and to build a sense of belonging with their peers. When we tell transgender girls that they can't play girls' sports – or transgender boys that they can't play boys' sports – they miss out, and being excluded can lead to harmful outcomes with regard to social and emotional wellbeing.

Beyond that, we have significant concerns about the ethical and legal implications of H3477. The methods proposed for identifying trans athletes are invasive, and releasing the results of the methods are illegal under medical privacy laws. Releasing the results could also traumatically "out" a child, forcing them to disclose their gender identity, before they may be ready to share.

Anti-transgender activists' continued focus on elite athletics is telling the smallest fraction of this story: Most people impacted by this discriminatory bill are transgender students who just want to play on a middle school or high school team, not elite or professional teams. Local schools across the nation are already creating policies that protect transgender youth and ensure a level playing field for all students – and they're working. Blanket bans on transgender student athletes undermine those local efforts.

Discriminatory legislation runs counter to the growing consensus in the medical community that treating trans young people with affirmation and respect is a central means of improving their health outcomes. Major medical associations, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Medicine, recognize that supporting transgender youth is critical to their health and well-being.

At the end of the day, everyone should be treated with dignity and respect, including transgender young people. And a supermajority of South Carolinians agree, with 68% saying that they support comprehensive nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people.

We ask that you trust our professional care, lead with compassion, and vote NO on H3477.

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