Pediatric Provider Perspectives on Laws and Policies Impacting Sports Participation for Transgender Youth

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Since May 2021, numerous state legislatures in the United States have introduced bills to restrict the participation of transgender and gender diverse (trans) youth in gender-segregated sports in a manner consistent with their gender identity. The purpose of this study was to understand how medical providers of pediatric gender-affirming care for trans youth view these legislative efforts and how they believe these bills will affect their practice and patients. In March 2021, we recruited participants using listservs known to be frequented by providers of gender-affirming medical care to complete a survey about bills that restrict trans youths' participation in sex-segregated sports. Eligible participants were over the age of 18, currently worked as a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant, and provided gender-affirming care to trans youth under the age of 18 in the United States. We analyzed the responses of 103 providers from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Most participants identified as White (77%), cisgender women (70%), and specialized in pediatric care (52%). The most salient theme, described by nearly all participants, was that legislation banning trans youth from sports participation would lead to worsening discrimination and stigmatization. Other themes included worsening mental and physical health of trans youth, forced changes to clinical practice, politicization of trans youth, and efforts required to stop these bills. Providers of gender-affirming care in this study overwhelmingly opposed legislation that bans trans youth from sports participation citing the severe consequences to the well-being of trans youth. More research is needed to examine stakeholder's opinions regarding legislation that does not ban but otherwise restricts sports participation by trans youth.

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