



New bills would protect gender-affirming care services in Pittsburgh

90.5 WESA | By [Kiley Koscinski](#)

Published August 29, 2023 at 5:38 PM EDT



Rick Bowmer / AP

People gather in support of transgender youth during a rally at the Utah State Capitol Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2023, in Salt Lake City.

Pittsburgh could become a sanctuary city for transgender health care. A package of bills introduced in City Council Tuesday would prohibit city agencies from supporting investigations by other states where certain gender-affirming care practices are prohibited. The legislation could also stall enforcement of any potential ban in Pennsylvania.

Councilor Barb Warwick, who sponsored the bills, said the protections are critical as trans health care becomes a political football nationwide.

“Given the number of bills coming into states around the country ... that are proposing criminalization of gender-affirming care, we wanted to make sure that type of care is protected here in the City of Pittsburgh,” Warwick said.

One bill would shield providers and patients from out-of-state criminal or civil investigations: It would prohibit any city agency from helping to investigate the receipt or provision of gender-affirming services.

A second bill safeguards treatments if a Pennsylvania-wide ban were ever to take effect. The bill instructs city officials and police to “deprioritize enforcement of crimes related to providing or receiving gender-affirming health services to the furthest extent possible.”

WESA Inbox Edition Newsletter

Start your morning with today's news on Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania.

Subscribe

The bills, which are also sponsored by council members Bobby Wilson and Bruce Kraus, are modeled after [legislation passed last year to protect abortion rights](#) in city limits. The abortion protections came after [the United States Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade](#).

Pittsburgh leaders are also [following in the footsteps of Kansas City](#), where similar protections for gender-affirming care became law in May.

On Tuesday, Warwick urged Allegheny County officials to pass similar legislation, which would protect gender-affirming care county-wide.

“Trans rights are human rights, and we cannot call ourselves a welcoming city for our LGBTQ+ community if we don’t take proactive action to protect these rights when they are under attack,” she said.

Gender-affirming care encompasses a range of treatments, from medical procedures to psychological and behavioral interventions. [Medical professionals say](#) gender-affirming



WESA

BBC World Service

treatment has been proven to decrease depression, anxiety and suicide attempts in trans individuals.

Mayor Ed Gainey's spokesperson Maria Montañó, a trans woman, said gender-affirming support can mean the difference between life and death.

"This health care saved my life," she said. "If it wasn't for my ability to receive the kind of care I need to be who I am – my full, authentic self – I don't think I could serve in the role that I do today."

But these treatments, and trans people in general, have been the target of mounting political attacks. [A Reuters investigation](#) found that 142 bills restricting gender-affirming health care have been introduced in 37 states this year alone.

Anti-trans political ads [were broadcast on Pittsburgh radio airwaves](#) late last year, with graphic descriptions of children and gender-confirmation surgeries.

News From WESA

Locomotive manufacturer Wabtec, union reach tentative deal to end 2-month strike

Pittsburgh advances deer bowhunting program to manage overpopulation

Municipalities say Pennsylvania court ruling on stormwater fees could drain them financially

Bills restricting trans rights in Pennsylvania have passed one or both chambers in recent years, but have not become law. Former Gov. Tom Wolf [vetoed a measure](#) that would have banned colleges from allowing transgender athletes to compete in sports that align with their gender identity. A similar bill was reintroduced this spring.

Regarding medical restrictions, one bill currently under consideration in the state House would extend the statute of limitations for minors who received gender affirmation treatment to sue their care provider for medical malpractice.



patient is an adult.

According to Montaño, gender-affirming care for children is often just supporting their social transition, which could include a name change, a haircut and dressing differently.

“It's not the case that a kid can just talk to their doctor and say, ‘Hey, I'm trans,’ and get hormones and surgery in the next two weeks,” she said. “That is just not something that happens.”

Central Outreach, a Pittsburgh-based medical clinic prioritizing LGBTQ health care, applauded the legislation Tuesday. Central Outreach often assists patients struggling to navigate Pittsburgh's health care systems.

“This measure is an important step in protecting the lives of gender diverse people and the lifesaving healthcare we are proud to be able to provide,” said Remy Black, the group's gender-affirming care patient navigator. “Access to gender-affirming care should be a human right, not a political rallying point.”

The range of gender-affirming procedures available in Pittsburgh is limited. A [Public Source investigation](#) found that care for trans patients is difficult to access and often inconsistent.

“There's a variety of places to receive things like hormone replacement therapy... top surgery or facial feminization surgery,” Montaño said. But a list of resources offered by Central Outreach does not include a single provider in the region for bottom surgeries.

Montaño is hopeful that if the package of bills passes, more providers may come to Pittsburgh, and health care offerings for trans people could expand.

“We would welcome [providers] with open arms and say, ‘This is a place where not only will you be protected, but the people that you serve will be protected as well,’” she said.

Tags

[Politics & Government](#)[Top Story](#)

WESA

BBC World Service



Kiley Koscinski

Kiley Koscinski covers city government, policy and how Pittsburghers engage with city services. She also works as a fill-in host for All Things Considered. Kiley has previously served as a producer on The Confluence and Morning Edition.

[See stories by Kiley Koscinski](#)

Have a tip for the WESA newsroom? Email news@wesa.fm.

Latest News From WESA



What to do in Pittsburgh this weekend: Sept. 1-3



Gov. Josh Shapiro removes college credit requirement for Pennsylvania State Police Academy



Pennsylvania is considering an earlier 2024 presidential primary, partly to avoid voting on Passover



Pittsburgh police officer hosts adult short story class in Homewood





Allegheny County receives \$1.85 million from CDC to improve services for people with dementia

90.5 WESA
Pittsburgh's NPR News Station

**SUPPORT THE
NEWS AND
INFORMATION
YOU RELY ON.**

**DONATE
TODAY**



WESA
BBC World Service



Politics & Government

Casey touts policy wins on pregnant-worker protections, drug prices during Pittsburgh stop

Chris Potter,

U.S. Sen. Bob Casey was on hand Tuesday in Pittsburgh to discuss the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which went into effect this summer, roughly a decade after he first sponsored the legislation requiring employers to make accommodations for the sake of pregnant employees.



WESA
BBC World Service



Politics & Government

Allegheny County to create climate action plan

Julia Zenkevich,

At a meeting Tuesday night, county council approved a bill that would direct the county's Department of Sustainability to create the plan by July 2024.



WESA
BBC World Service

Development & Transportation

Pittsburgh Regional Transit to end its COVID-19 vaccine requirement for employees

Margaret J. Krauss,

Effective Aug. 31, Pittsburgh Regional Transit will no longer require its employees to have the COVID-19 vaccine. The mandate has been in place since March 2022.

[Load More](#)

© 2023 90.5 WESA

About Us

90.5 WESA
Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting
WESA Staff
Board of Directors
DEI Efforts

Contact

Contact Us
Careers

Resources

Reports & Resources
Public Files
Privacy & Terms of Use
COVID-19
FCC Applications

