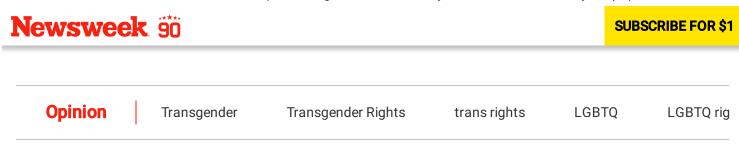
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# Stand Up for Transgender and Nonbinary Youth This Month and Beyond | Opinion

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By **Tricia Raikes** co-founder, Raikes Foundation

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Cober is LGBTQ History Month. It is meant to be a time for the nation to celebrate the accomplishments of LGBTQ heroes and honor the bravery of people who live their lives fully and openly. Nearly 30 years after the first LGBTQ History Month, many across the country are now targeting transgender and nonbinary youth, with particularly devastating consequences.

The surge of anti-trans legislation nationwide is testing the core of America. Over 500 <u>anti-trans bills</u> have been introduced this year, and 85 have passed. These bills threaten the safety of America's safety, autonomy, and overall well-being. From schools to churches, doctor's offices, and even at home, people who are transgender are being denied their right to self-determination. And parents of transgender youth are being forced to deny their children the rights they deserve.

I recently walked alongside a close friend whose child chose to transition. While learning together and having many conversations to understand the choice better, my friend noticed a shift in her child—social anxiety decreased, her child engaged more with daily life activities, and became a more joyous person overall. My friend is horrified that many places in the U.S. are determined to take her child's rights away. As a parent, she believes she should have the freedom to work with and learn from her child and ultimately support their choice to now show up as their true self.

As a parent, I believe we have a responsibility to protect our children from political bullies who choose to single out and harass young people and their families in deeply vulnerable moments. And I'm encouraged that most Americans share that view. A <u>survey out this year</u>

regisiation almed to limit the rights of LGDTQ people in America.



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Still, right-wing politicians are ignoring the prevailing perspective. More than 125 laws introduced this year would restrict the ability of medical professionals to do their job, preventing them from providing trans youth age-appropriate, medically necessary, best-practice health care. In 2022, legislators in <u>Alabama</u> passed one of the most hostile anti-trans bills, which makes providing trans-affirming health care a Class C felony, with a penalty of up to 10 years in prison. Thirty of the proposed bills this year are "bathroom bills," which harm the fundamental dignity of trans youth by restricting their ability to use public bathrooms (and those in their schools) that align with their gender identity. <u>Seven states have already enacted laws</u> that require or allow the misgendering of students in schools.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial that Americans come together as a community to protect the rights of LGBTQ individuals. We don't need to be seasoned activists to work together and make a difference.

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Look no further than the moms leading <u>Red, Wine, and Blue</u> (RWB) for guidance about combating extremism in schools and communities. They offer multiple ways in which parents can learn how to have open conversations with fellow parents about supporting kids and organizing against the culture wars happening in our backyards. Here are a few specifics highlighted in a <u>podcast</u> the group hosts:

-Listen, show up, and read about LGBTQ issues-educating ourselves is a critical first step.

-Don't repeat or ignore the disinformation. Set the record straight on bad information by using facts and stories about real people impacted.



A transgender pride flag is seen. ALLISON DINNER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



-Engage in conversations with people who disagree with you-find common ground and remember many of us agree on basic values, such as the importance of families having the freedom to decide what's best for them.

-Understand where political leaders stand on protecting our children's rights, health, and education, and take action to prevent those who don't want to protect our children from getting elected.

As responsible citizens, we must engage in this fight, utilize our collective power to create fair and just communities, and elect local and national leaders whom we can trust to do the same. In these tumultuous times, one of our highest priorities should be to protect allour children, including LBGTQ children, who deserve access to gender-affirming health care, mental health, and other critical support they need to thrive as their whole selves.

amining the numerity of all our generations to come.

Tricia Raikes is the co-founder of the Raikes Foundation with her husband, Jeff. The foundation works toward a just and inclusive society where all young people have the support they need to reach their full potential.

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