

POLITICS

Readers had comments on our stories about transgender issues. We have answers

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Our stories on Kentucky's new law prohibiting gender-affirming medical care – as well as a similar bill proposed in Ohio – generated hundreds of online comments.

We're taking your comments, word for word, and answering some of them.

But first, here's a quick refresher on the new law and where it currently stands.

The part of the law that bans some medical care for transgender minors could go into effect June 29. The part of the law restricting gender-affirming bathroom use in schools and changing how school counselors can help students, immediately went into effect when the law was passed in March. Ohio is considering similar legislation.

The Kentucky law's looming implementation hinges on whether the ACLU of Kentucky and others are able to get an injunction to temporarily halt the medical part of the law.

The Enquirer and The Courier Journal covered this law – formerly SB150 – when it was passed, but there's still a lot of misinformation and confusion about it.

Kentucky SB 150: The anti-trans legislation passed. Here's what happens next

So, here are your questions and comments:

What is wrong with the world??? There are men and women. That's it; sorry to disappoint everyone. End of Story.

Medical professionals don't agree that's the end of the story.

The first thing to know is that sex and gender are different. According to the American Medical Association Journal of Ethics, sex is the biological difference between males and females. Gender is "the continuum of complex psychosocial self-perceptions, attitudes, and expectations people have about members of both sexes."

As far as sex goes, there are biologically male, female and intersex classifications. Intersex people are born with biological traits that aren't strictly male or female. That can include anatomy, chromosomes and hormones.

The number of genders is, well, a lot. According to the JAMA Network, gender is the social, social, environmental, cultural, and behavioral "factors and choices that influence a person's self-identity and health." People can be cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, agender, pangender or an array of many other forms of gender, according to PFLAG.

You can find a pretty good list of the many genders here.

Transgender people (including nonbinary and third gender people) have existed in cultures worldwide since ancient times.

This is true. Our producer Hana Khalyleh broke down the history of trans people in a column published in March. Here's what they had to say:

"Going as far back as ancient Greece, there are documented accounts of people living their lives occupying a different gender role than the one they were assigned at birth. These don't just include well-known trans activists in the 1980s like Marsha P. Johnson but also figures like Albert Cashier, a trans man who served in the Union Army in the Civil War and Victorian-era writer Jennie June. (Not to mention, any number of pre-colonial cultures

that had existing “third genders” or nonbinary genders, including the Samoan fa‘afafine or the Bugis, a South Sulawesi Indonesian people whose society includes five genders).”

Do you really believe that this is the most important legislation the General Assembly should be working on?

The Kentucky Legislature passed dozens of bills during the 2023 session.

The highest profile ones included legalizing medical marijuana, legalizing sport betting, ending expanded Medicaid coverage in the state and outlawing gender-affirming care for minors.

Marijuana, sports betting and more: 6 takeaways from Kentucky's 2023 legislative session

Trans athletes are no better or worse than cis athletes. The seemingly inherent advantages of "maleness," don't guarantee athletic success.

The science is split and it's a hard issue to study for a few reasons.

The NCAA requires trans females to be on one year of testosterone suppression treatment before they can compete on women's teams.

Some studies show trans female athletes keep a competitive edge after a year of testosterone suppression. Other studies show trans women have no or little advantage in elite sports.

The resources needed to become an elite athlete makes the studies difficult. Nutrition, genetic factors and pricey training all play a role in who is successful in sports.

So, the science is still out on this one.

If a teacher wants to call everyone "they/them" are they allowed to? If a teacher wants to call everyone "he/him," are they allowed to?

Under the new law, teachers can legally use any pronouns to address students; they're not required to use pronouns used by the student.

Ignoring the pronouns a student uses might be a violation of Title IX, which protects students against discrimination based on one's sex.

“What the problem is there is that most schools, and many school districts, will interpret Title IX in a way that suggests that misgendering or dead naming a student – using a student's incorrect name that they no longer go by – creates a hostile learning environment, is harassing the students and is in violation of federal law Title IX,” said Chris Hartman, Executive Director of Kentucky's Fairness Campaign, an advocacy and lobbying group for LGBTQ+ rights.

The Courier Journal reported the new law could also be in violation of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which protects students' privacy.

Can the mentally ill buy and own guns? Is trans a mental illness? Can trans people own guns?

In Kentucky, a mental health diagnosis does not prohibit someone from owning a gun – and being transgender isn't a mental illness.

“Many transgender people do not experience their gender as distressing or disabling, which implies that identifying as transgender does not constitute a mental disorder,” American Psychological Association says.

The organization goes on to say transgender people can experience stress, depression, and anxiety because of discrimination and a lack of affordable resources. But those are separate issues.

While being transgender was previously considered a mental illness or mental disorder, medical organizations around the world agree it's incorrect to categorize them as such.

More: School safety bill prompted by Marshall County shooting wins House OK

What is involved in juvenile trans care? What is the actual 'care' involved? We never hear about the details.

Retired pediatrician Dr. Christopher Bolling worked in Northern Kentucky for more than 30 years.

Gender-affirming care, he said, means "you give kids space and time to figure this stuff out."

Medical care varies from patient to patient, but here is generally what he said gender-affirming care looks like in Kentucky:

First, a pediatrician like Bolling would continue to see a patient as they talk through their concerns and answer questions they may have. In time, he would refer the patient to a transgender clinic or therapist where they would be screened for other diagnosis, like ADHD or depression.

Some patients might choose to socially transition, meaning they dress in gender-affirming clothes and may choose a new name or pronouns. If a medical transition is decided upon, puberty delaying medication could begin at the onset of puberty (whenever that is) to delay the process. If a patient stops taking them, puberty starts again.

Medical professionals – likely an endocrinologist – may then begin hormone replacement therapy when a patient is around 16 or 17 – the age can vary depending on when puberty is completed.

Am I going to let my 12-year-old daughter remove her breasts? Or my 13-year-old son take estrogen?

Surgical procedures are not considered a standard of care for minors in Kentucky.

“We could not have been more clear with the Kentucky General Assembly that in the Commonwealth of Kentucky there are no gender affirming surgeries, of which we are aware, occurring before the age of 18,” Hartman said.