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U.S. NEWS

## Ohio governor signs bill limiting bathroom use by transgender students



FILE - Mike DeWine speaks, Jan. 14, 2019, in Cedarville, Ohio. (AP Photo/John Minchillo, Pool, File)

BY [JULIE CARR SMYTH](#) AND [GEOFF MULVIHILL](#)

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Transgender students from kindergarten through college at Ohio public and private schools will be banned from using multiperson bathrooms that fit their gender identities under a measure that Republican Gov. Mike DeWine said Wednesday that he has signed.

DeWine signed the law out of public view Tuesday over the objections of Democrats, teachers' unions and civil rights groups, which had hoped that [his objections to a ban on gender-affirming care for minors](#) last year would carry through and prompt another veto. It takes effect in 90 days.

The governor issued no statement regarding the signing.

The Republican-backed measure — labeled the “Protect All Students Act” — requires public and private schools, colleges and universities to designate separate bathrooms, locker rooms and overnight accommodations “for the exclusive use” of either males and females, based on one’s gender assigned at or near birth, in school buildings and other facilities used for school-sponsored events. It contains no enforcement mechanism.



“It revolves around safety, security, and, I think, common sense. It protects our children and grandchildren in private spaces where they are most vulnerable,” said Republican Ohio state Sen. Jerry Cirino, the bill’s sponsor.

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School employees, emergency situations and people assisting young children or someone with a disability are exempted from the restrictions and schools can still offer single-use or family bathrooms.

Aaron Baer, president of the Center for Christian Virtue, which backed the bill, said in a statement, "Common sense is on a winning streak in America today. No student should be forced to go into the bathroom or locker room with a student of the opposite sex, and Ohio's kids are better protected now because of Governor DeWine's decision to sign this bill."

The ACLU of Ohio was among the groups that had lobbied for a veto, condemning the measure as a violation of the right of privacy of LGBTQ+ Ohioans that will make them less safe.

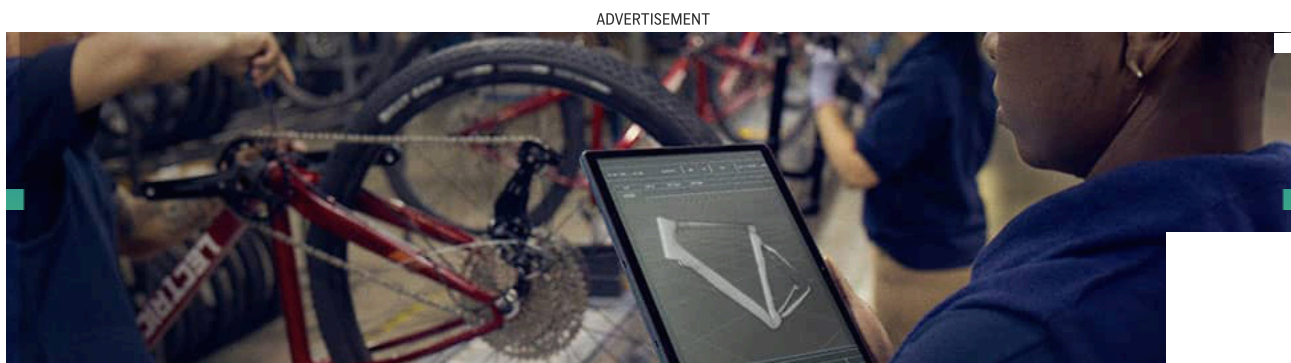


Equality Ohio, the state's LGBTQ+ advocacy and legal aid organization, said the law poses risks to transgender youth "or anyone perceived as transgender by authorities."

"We are deeply disappointed that Governor DeWine has allowed this dangerous bill to become law that puts vulnerable trans youth at risk for abuse and harassment," Executive Director Dwayne Steward said in a statement. The group said it will continue to fight "for a state that embraces and respects all its residents."

With DeWine's signature, Ohio adds to the pushback that's cropped up nationally among many Republican politicians, including President-elect Donald Trump, as transgender people have gained more visibility and acceptance on some fronts in recent years.

Twenty-six states have now adopted laws restarting or banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors. The U.S. [Supreme Court](#) is scheduled to hear arguments Dec. 4 on whether Tennessee's ban on such treatments can continue to be enforced; any ruling is likely to impact policies in other states, too.



At least 11 states have adopted laws, like Ohio's, barring transgender girls and women from girls and women's bathrooms at public schools – and in some cases, in other government facilities.

And at least 24 states have laws dictating which sports competitions transgender girls and women can join.

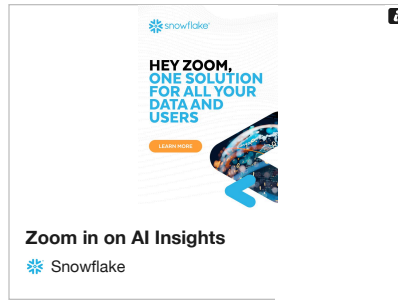
Ohio's bathroom bill was debated for 19 months before finally clearing the GOP-led Legislature on Nov. 13, during Transgender Awareness Week. It was tacked onto a separate piece of legislation by the Ohio House that related to the state's College Credit Plus program, which allows high-schoolers to earn college credit.

[Trump's campaign](#) leaned heavily into opposing transgender rights in the last weeks of his race against Vice President Kamala Harris, including Trump's vow at a Madison Square Garden rally that "we will keep men out of women's sports" and campaign ads saying, "Kamala's for they/them. President Trump is for you."

It's not clear what policies Trump might adopt once he takes office in January. But bills relating to gender issues are already being queued up in state legislatures that come into session early in 2025.



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In Texas, for instance, there are proposed measures to bar using state money to pay for “gender reassignment,” to use state money to pay to reverse gender transitions, and to give people who receive gender-affirming care before they turn 15 until they turn 25 to sue their doctors for malpractice, among others. Democrats in the Republican-dominated legislature there have also introduced some bills intended to protect people from discrimination on the basis of “gender identity or expression.”

In Ohio, a law that both bars gender-affirming care for minors and blocks transgender girls and women from participating in girls and women’s sports competitions took effect in August. It took a rocky path, though. The measure became law only after the legislature [overrode DeWine’s veto](#). And after that, a judge put enforcement on hold for about four months before allowing it.



**JULIE CARR SMYTH**

Smyth has covered government and politics from Columbus, Ohio, for The Associated Press since 2006.



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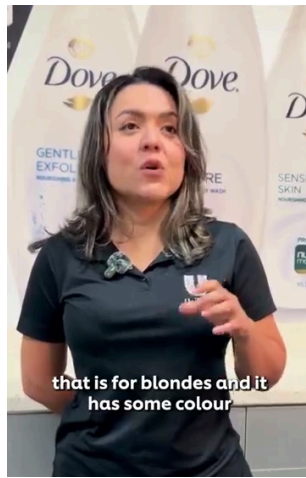
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