

LOCAL POLITICS

Bill removing transgender civil rights sparks protests at Iowa State Capitol

House Republicans advanced the bill Monday on a 13-8 vote, making it eligible for floor debate as soon as Thursday.



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DES MOINES, Iowa — House Republicans moved forward with a bill Monday that would remove civil rights protections for transgender Iowans from state law.

The bill, [House File 583](#), passed through the House Judiciary Committee on a 13-8 vote, hours after the subcommittee advanced it along party lines (2-1), with Rep. Ross Wilburn, D-Story County, in opposition. HF 583 is the successor to [House Study Bill 242](#).

HF 583 also removes protections from discrimination in employment and wages based on gender identity, one aspect of the legislation that sparked intense debate in subcommittee Monday.

"To take away the right for people to be treated fairly in this state would be to spit in the face of everyone who has fought tooth and nail for these rights," said Paden Sheumaker, program coordinator of One Iowa, an LGBTQ+ advocacy group.

Debate featured multiple hiccups as Iowa State Patrol troopers removed one speaker for talking over the two-minute time limit, and Rep. Steven Holt (R-Crawford), the floor manager of the bill, asked speakers to stop debate for six minutes as protestors chanted outside the chambers: "No more, transphobia has got to go!"

Holt has introduced multiple bills the past two weeks that have drawn crowds during committee meetings, including [legislation](#) that would put U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) duties onto local and state law enforcement.

Those in favor of HF 583 argue the bill makes sure transgender Iowans don't receive elevated protections over others, and that it protects women and children.

"This isn't about hatred or exclusion, it's about acknowledging that women have the right to feel secure in spaces meant for them," said Amber Williams, with Inspired Life, a conservative religious organization.

Brad Lawson, another advocate for the bill, added: "Our educational system is there to educate our kids. Based on facts and not feelings. There's no place for gender identity for our most vulnerable that are already confused by so much in this world."

According to the bill, anyone who changes their sex designation through surgery or treatment – from the one assigned at birth – will also no longer be allowed to have that sex change on their birth certificate.

Rep. Samantha Fett, R-Warren County said Monday that the bill is not about discrimination, but instead to protect "locker rooms, and bathrooms from biological males." She added, "there are two sexes, no gender identity and infinite personalities."

Rep. Ross Wilburn, who has a transgender son, said lawmakers should not "take away civil rights from any group of people."

A similar bill was introduced during last year's legislative session, but failed to pass through the House.

HF 583 is eligible for floor debate as early as Thursday.

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