



AAP, medical community speak out to protect transgender youths

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Update April 8, 2022: *The Academy also is speaking out about Alabama legislation that would harm the health of transgender youth. Read the [AAP statement here](#).*

The Academy is continuing its advocacy to push back against efforts in Texas that threaten the health and well-being of transgender youths.

The Texas attorney general issued a nonbinding legal opinion in February arguing that gender-affirming care meets the state's definition of child abuse and neglect. Following this opinion, the Texas governor issued a letter directing the state's Department of Family and Protective Services to investigate reports of gender-affirming care as child abuse and neglect. Neither the nonbinding legal opinion nor the governor's directive changes state law. However, they are having a chilling effect on care for transgender youths.

The Academy and the medical community immediately spoke out against the directive. The AAP and the Texas Pediatric Society (the AAP Texas Chapter) strongly opposed the actions in a [statement](#).

"This harmful directive leaves families seeking gender-affirming care in Texas with nowhere to turn. Pediatricians could be investigated for child abuse by simply providing evidence-based, medically necessary services. Gender affirming care is not abuse. Politics has no place in the exam room," AAP President Moira A. Szilagyi, M.D., Ph.D., FAAP, said in the press release.

AAP policy states that youths who identify as transgender should have access to comprehensive, gender-affirming and developmentally appropriate health care that is provided in a safe and inclusive clinical space in close consultation with parents.

The AAP also joined a [press statement](#) with five other medical organizations opposing efforts to criminalize gender-affirming care in Texas or anywhere else.

“The trusted relationship between a physician and their patient should never be jeopardized by the actions of policymakers, and a physician should not be criminalized or penalized for providing care,” the groups stated.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also [released a statement](#) reaffirming the agency's support and protection for LGBTQI+ youths. Additionally, the statement outlined new guidance and resources for providers, youths, families and caretakers.

The Academy and its partners will continue to advocate for policies that support the health and well-being of transgender and gender-diverse youths and will oppose any actions that do the opposite.

Protecting digital privacy of children and adolescents

The Academy's work to protect the digital privacy and well-being of children and adolescents persists, as leaders in Washington have taken notice of the issue and are advancing policies to address it.

The AAP recently endorsed the Kids Online Safety Act (S. 3663). The bipartisan legislation, introduced by Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), would address technology platforms' use of manipulative design and data use practices that impact the health and well-being of young people. It also provides families with tools, safeguards and transparency to protect them online and creates a duty of care for technology companies to act in children's best interests.

The issue also received attention during President Joe Biden's first State of the Union [address](#) when he called on legislators to strengthen privacy protections, ban targeted advertising to children and demand technology companies stop collecting personal data from children.

AAP President Moira A. Szilagyi, M.D., Ph.D., FAAP, applauded those announcements.

“We echo the president's call for Congress to strengthen protections for children online and stand ready to partner with the White House to hold social media platforms accountable in doing that work,” Dr. Szilagyi said.

During a roundtable discussion earlier this year, leaders from AAP and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry joined Frances Haugen, who blew the whistle on Facebook's practices of prioritizing company profits over public safety.

The Academy will work to sustain the momentum in Washington and call for policies that are most supportive of children's health.

Protecting children from magnet ingestions

The Academy is weighing in with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) on efforts to protect children from high-powered magnet sets that often are sold as desk toys for adults but are extremely dangerous if children swallow them.

At the beginning of the year, the agency published a proposed rule that would set a mandatory safety standard to address the hazards associated with ingesting high-powered magnets. Taking action against these dangerous products has been a major product safety priority for the Academy, as the high-powered magnets pose risks of serious injury and death if children ingest multiple magnets.

Benjamin D. Hoffman, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention, recently testified at a CPSC public hearing on the dangers of these products and the need for strong safety standards. He also shared examples of his own young patients who have been injured seriously by the magnet sets.

“These products represent a constant danger to children who have access to them, and warning labels and other voluntary efforts are woefully insufficient to prevent the significant and completely preventable suffering I and my colleagues see in our work,” Dr. Hoffman said.

The Academy is urging the CPSC to finalize this overdue safety standard to protect children and remove dangerous products from the marketplace.

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