

**NEWS > HEALTH**

# Florida medical boards vote to prohibit gender-affirming care for minors

By **NELLY ONTIVEROS CERVANTES**UPDATED: November 4, 2022 at 10:37 PM EDT

---

Two state medical boards voted Friday to prohibit gender-affirming treatment for patients in Florida under the age of 18, despite warnings from some parents and practitioners that the ban will harm transgender youth.

The decision by the Florida Board of Medicine and the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine to prohibit puberty blockers, cross-hormonal treatment and gender-affirming surgery as methods to treat gender dysphoria in minors followed a pair of acrimonious public meetings in Orlando.

Even as they approved the ban on Friday, the boards differed on whether to grant an exception for gender-affirming treatment under research purposes.

The Board of Medicine did not support the research exception, while allowing treatment for minors who are already undergoing gender-affirming care. The Board of Osteopathic Medicine voted to allow such treatment in cases involving clinical trials and research.



People hold signs during a joint board meeting of the Florida Board of Medicine and the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine gather to establish new guidelines limiting gender-affirming care in Florida, on Friday, November 4, 2022.

Carly Sittig, a 35-year-old transgender woman, attended the meeting to advocate for gender-affirming care. She said hormone replacement therapy was not an option she was younger, leaving her with only three options: Deal with dysphoria, dream of being a girl — or death.

"You're signing a death sentence for some of these children and we cannot allow that," Sittig said.

Megan Holleran, a licensed clinical mental health counselor, said she attended the meeting to vow for the positive impact that gender-affirming care has on patients struggling psychologically.

"I've literally witnessed my clients become happier, healthier individuals as a result of gender-affirming care," she said.

Holleran said she worried the boards' decision will directly impact the rate of suicide ideation among those dealing with gender dysphoria, which is a form of distress suffered by those whose gender identity doesn't match their biological sex.

"It feels like something that's being stripped away from the community, like a trans-genocide," she said.

On the opposing side, Erin Brewer, who identifies as a former transgender, said she suffered from dysphoria after experiencing sexual assault. Continuing to receive gender-affirming care, she said, would have only worsened her condition.

“It would’ve reinforced all the mistaken beliefs that caused me to develop gender dysphoria, that being a girl is bad, that it was my fault that those men hurt me, that my body was a mistake or that it was too dangerous being a girl,” she said.



Kimberly Cox, a member of Women’s Voices of SW Florida, gets a hug after a joint board meeting of the Florida Board of Medicine and the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine on Friday, November 4, 2022.

Brewer said her dysphoria was a coping mechanism and therapy and counseling changed her perspective about transitioning.

Sittig said that even though she did not know as a child what being transgender was she always knew she was different. She said the boards’ decision will not stop her advocacy.

“They already made their decision, they’re just doing this dog and pony show just to satiate us, but you know what, all that did was make us more hungry and we will not stop,” Sittig said.

The new rules align with the Florida Health Department’s [guidance](#) released in April advising against gender-affirming care in the state.

That guidance countered [an advisory](#) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in March that labeled gender-affirming care as “crucial” to the health and well-being of transgender and nonbinary people.

Gender-affirming care is also endorsed by major medical associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians and the American Medical Association.

*Originally Published: November 4, 2022 at 6:34 PM EDT*

**2022 > November > 4**