

Florida doctors' board tightens ban on gender-affirming care

February 11 2023, by Mike Schneider



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis listens to others during a news conference where he spoke of new law enforcement legislation that will be introduced during the upcoming session, Jan. 26, 2023, in Miami. David McIntosh, the president of the influential Club For Growth group, said Tuesday, Feb. 7, that the group has invited a half dozen potential Republican candidates for the White House to its donor summit in Florida next month including DeSantis. Credit: AP Photo/Marta Lavandier, File

A prohibition against puberty blocking hormones and gender-affirming surgeries for minors in Florida was tightened further after a board overseeing doctors eliminated an exception for clinical trials Friday at the request of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' administration.

Some members of the public attending the meeting in Tallahassee shouted expletives, and law enforcement officers positioned themselves in the front of the room after the vote by the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine.

The decision came after one member of the public after another testified at the packed meeting of the osteopathic medicine board and the Florida Board of Medicine that gender-affirming treatment had been "magical" and like "opening a prison door" for them or their children. One transgender adult man during his testimony gave himself an injection of hormones in front of the doctors' boards. Others said treatment had stopped them from "fighting with themselves" and contemplating suicide.

"I'm a teenager. Without getting this medicine at this crucial age I would have been waiting for my life to start," said L.J. Valenzuela, a trans man in high school who said he was getting hormone replacement treatment.

Judy Schmidt told board members that she worried that her trans son, who was 6 when he told her he was a boy, will have been transitioning socially for four to five years before he reaches puberty and won't be able to get the gender-affirming care he needs.

"You as doctors are supposed to do no harm," Schmidt told the boards made up primarily by doctors. "If you make this blanket rule, you are doing harm."

The Florida Board of Medicine and the Florida Board of Osteopathic

Medicine approved rules last fall that prohibited gender-affirming surgery and puberty blocking hormones for minors, though minors receiving puberty blockers prior to the rules taking effect could continue to take them. The osteopathic medicine board made an exception for clinical research trials that examined the long-term impact of the treatments.

During Friday's meeting, the Florida Department of Health asked the boards to tweak the rules to eliminate the osteopathic medicine board's exception for research. The DeSantis administration's health department got the ball rolling on curbing gender-affirming treatment for minors in Florida last year by petitioning the boards to pass the prohibition. In 2021, DeSantis, who is widely considered to be weighing a run for the Republican presidential nomination, signed a bill barring transgender girls and women from playing on public school teams intended for student athletes assigned female at birth.

John Wilson, [general counsel](#) for the Department of Health, told the boards that the exception would create confusion since one board allowed it, but the other didn't.

"The department is concerned the exception undermines the purpose of this rule," Wilson said.

State Rep. Anna Eskamani, a Democrat from Orlando, called the prohibition against gender-affirming care "politically motivated."

"We should not be making policy based on who can make a fundraising letter off it," Eskamani said.

Florida Board of Medicine member Hector Vila disputed that interpretation of the boards' actions.

"This isn't about trans- or homophobia," said Vila, a doctor in Tampa.
"This isn't about politics."

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