

# Georgia law will ban most transgender care for kids under 18

March 24 2023, by Jeff Amy

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Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp delivers the State of the State address on the House floor of the state Capitol in Atlanta, Jan. 25, 2023. Kemp on Thursday, March 23, 2023, signed a bill that would ban most gender-affirming surgeries and hormone replacement therapies for transgender people under 18. Credit: AP Photo/Alex Slitz, File

Georgia will ban most gender-affirming surgeries and hormone replacement therapies for transgender people younger than 18, under a new law signed by Gov. Brian Kemp on Thursday.

Legislators gave final approval to the law on Tuesday, despite impassioned pleas from Democrats and LGBTQ advocates against what has become the most fiercely contested bill of Georgia's 2023 legislative session. The Republican governor signed the bill in private, without the ceremony he sometimes uses to celebrate new laws.

[Senate Bill 140](#) is part of a nationwide effort by conservatives to restrict transgender athletes, gender-affirming care and drag shows. Governors in Mississippi, Utah and South Dakota have signed similar bills.

"I appreciate the many hours of respectful debate and deliberation by members of the General Assembly that resulted in final passage of this bill," Kemp said in a statement. "As Georgians, parents and elected leaders, it is our highest responsibility to safeguard the bright, promising future of our kids—and SB 140 takes an important step in fulfilling that mission."

Opponents say they believe the new law is an unconstitutional infringement on parents' rights. The American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia said it would "use every legal means at our disposal" to overturn the law shortly after Kemp signed it. Judges have—at least temporarily—blocked laws limiting gender-affirming treatment of transgender youth in Arkansas and Alabama.



Jennifer Bowie, center left, and Aaron Baker, center right, become emotional while watching discussion of SB 140 on a video monitor in the Capitol before it gets final approval at the state Senate in Atlanta, Tuesday, March 21, 2023. SB 140 would prevent medical professionals from giving transgender children certain hormones or surgical treatment. Credit: Arvin Temkar/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP

"It's disturbing how quickly the governor acts to sign bills that take away people's rights," ACLU of Georgia Executive Director Andrea Young said in a statement.

Doctors would still be able to prescribe medicines to block puberty under the Georgia law, which takes effect July 1. It also says that minors who are already receiving hormone therapy will be allowed to continue.

Supporters say the law's restrictions prevent children from making decisions they might later regret. Cole Muzio, president of the conservative Christian group Frontline Policy Action, had pushed for even stronger prohibitions. While he applauded Kemp signing the measure, he also called it "one of the weakest in the country," promising more efforts at restrictions.

"Gov. Kemp has never been afraid to protect children and we appreciate his continued commitment to standing against radical and harmful agendas," Muzio said in a statement.



State Sen. Carden Summers, R-Cordele, speaks to activists opposing SB 140 before the bill gets final approval at the Senate in Atlanta on Tuesday, March 21, 2023. SB 140, sponsored by Summers, would prevent medical professionals from giving transgender children certain hormones or surgical treatment. Credit:

Arvin Temkar/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP

But opponents say the measure is founded on disinformation and a desire to open a new front in the culture war to please conservative Republican voters, arguing it attacks vulnerable children and intrudes on private medical decisions.

Critics said the measure will require physicians to violate medical standards of care and that Republicans had abandoned their previous support for parents' rights to make choices.

"This legislation is a clear attack on the rights of transgender children, their parents, and the [medical community](#) in Georgia as a whole," Jeff Graham, the executive director of LGBTQ-rights group Equality Georgia, said in a statement. "Parents, working in collaboration with their medical teams and adhering to standards of care, should be able to make decisions regarding their child's healthcare."

The bill was amended to remove a clause that specifically shielded physicians from criminal and civil liability. That change was pushed for by conservative groups that want people to be able to sue their doctor if they later regret their treatment, although it's unclear how large that group might be.



Christine Cox, center, a parent of a transgender teenager, becomes emotional after speaking to state Sen. Carden Summers, R-Cordele, rear left, outside the Senate at the Capitol in Atlanta on Monday, March 20, 2023. Activists appeared at the Capitol to protest SB 140, a bill sponsored by Summers that would prevent medical professionals from giving transgender children certain hormones or surgical treatment. Credit: Arvin Temkar/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP

Transgender youth and parents heavily lobbied against the bill in recent weeks, warning lawmakers were further marginalizing a group already prone to taking their own lives at disturbingly high rates.

Republicans denied they wish anyone harm, saying they had children's best interest at heart and wanted people to be able to obtain counseling.

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Citation: Georgia law will ban most transgender care for kids under 18 (2023, March 24)  
retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-03-georgia-law-transgender-kids.html>

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