

Iowa governor signs gender-affirming care ban, bathroom law

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Republican Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds delivers her inaugural address, Jan. 13, 2023, in Des Moines, Iowa. On Wednesday, March 22, Reynolds signed a pair of laws restricting the bathrooms transgender students can use and banning gender-affirming medical care amid a flood of legislation nationwide targeting the trans community. She met with parents of transgender children to discuss the bills before signing them, The Des Moines Register reported. Credit: AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall, File

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds has signed a pair of laws restricting the bathrooms transgender students can use and banning gender-affirming medical care amid a flood of legislation nationwide targeting the trans community.

Reynolds, a Republican, met with parents of transgender children to discuss the bills before signing them Wednesday, The Des Moines Register [reported](#).

"My heart breaks," Reynolds told reporters. "I've sat down and met with them. It's not easy. It's not easy for me either. It's not easy for our elected officials to make these decisions. So I just, I hope they know that."

Her endorsement of the laws, which took effect immediately, came just one day after Arkansas's governor signed a similar bathroom law. And a bill in Idaho is awaiting its governor's signature.

In Iowa, the new law bars transgender students from using public school restrooms that align with their [gender identity](#). Students will need [parental consent](#) for special accommodations like using a faculty or single-occupancy restroom.

The law's enforcement relies on citizen complaint filings that authorities have three days to address. If the school doesn't act, that citizen could file a complaint with the attorney general who would investigate and possibly pursue legal action.

Republicans argued these restrictions are intended to protect the privacy and safety of students who may feel uncomfortable sharing a facility with their transgender peers. Democrats countered that there have been no such issues and worry the law could cause additional harassment of transgender kids.

Meanwhile, the new ban on gender-affirming care gives doctors six months to cease prescribing puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to their patients under 18. They are also prohibited from conducting gender-affirming surgeries, even though Iowa doctors say the surgeries are already rare.

Advocates suggest families of [transgender](#) youth contact their doctors for referrals to out-of-state treatment, which is still allowed. In neighboring Minnesota, Gov. Tim Walz has signed an executive order to protect access to gender-affirming care for minors.

Iowa LGBTQ advocacy groups, civil rights organizations and the state's teachers' union have condemned both laws. The groups say the bills counter the "parental choice" mantra Republicans often tout and that they force schools to the frontline in policing student liberties, the Cedar Rapids Gazette [reported](#).

"The Iowa Legislature and Gov. Reynolds have repeatedly targeted the most vulnerable students with rhetoric and legislation designed to suppress, out, target, ban, and censor Iowa's LGBTQ+ student communities," said Iowa State Education Association President Mike Beranek.

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