

Discrimination Harms Mental Health

Notes: Roughly 380 words, can grow or shrink depending on publication. Words in parenthesis are to provide stronger language if desired.

We were (deeply) disappointed by the new Administration's recent decision to rescind federal protections for transgender students that had allowed them to use the bathroom that matched their gender identity. The removal of that federal layer of protection puts the issue back on the states, and unfortunately **INSERT STATE NAME** has decided to introduce/pass legislation that discriminates against transgender people. This is a civil rights issue, but it is also a mental health issue, which is why we must speak up against this harmful legislation.

Scientific studies confirm that discrimination, bias, and prejudice have negative consequences on individuals' mental health and overall well-being. Studies cited by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services show that LGBT youth report higher rates of emotional distress, anxiety and suicidal behavior. A 2011 study in the Journal of Homosexuality cited research showing that that lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are up to six times more likely to attempt suicide.

LGBTQ individuals are at a much higher risk of being victims of violence than the general population. Increased rates of hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals have been associated with an increase in suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. Research has shown that violence against transgender individuals begins early in life, and this risk of violence persists throughout life. It is likely that forcing transgender individuals to use restrooms inconsistent with their gender identity puts them at increased risk of violence.

In contrast, several studies show marked improvement in overall physical and mental health when governments enact laws and policies that strength equality for LGBTQ people. Community and family acceptance have also been shown to contribute significantly to fewer occurrences of depression, anxiety, and suicidality for LGBTQ youth.

Our patients already face medical, social, and emotional challenges. We are concerned that this legislation creates unnecessary hardship for vulnerable patients, parents, and youth. Such hardship serves to increase suffering and morbidity among our state's citizens and, as such, raises great concern for us as psychiatric physicians.

We urge for the **repeal of existing *or* proposed** (discriminatory) legislation. We are here to help state legislators by providing our expertise on this issue and how its impacts our diverse patient populations. Please consider us a resource for legislators on any topic impacting mental health. It is our goal to work with legislators to help improve policy.

Signed,

HOW TO SUBMIT AN OP-ED OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Op-eds and commentaries are longer pieces written by an individual to express their views on a particular topic. They are often written in response to topics in the news. Unlike letters to the editor, op-eds are usually not written in response to a specific article.

Typically, an op-ed is 600-800 words long, but it can be shorter. This allows you to include several arguments or data points that support your main message. It's a good idea to think about what your opponents might say and include a paragraph refuting one of their likely arguments. As with a letter to the editor, remember to use active and lively language to make your points.

Each publication has its own standards for how long an op-ed can be and how to submit it for consideration. You can usually find these guidelines on the outlet's website, either in the opinion section or on a "contact us" page.

A letter to the editor is usually written in response to a story that appeared in a particular publication. It is an opportunity for the letter writer to express their views on the topic, clarify or contradict a point in the story, or add additional information that is relevant. Letters to the editor are some of the most widely read pages in many daily newspapers, so they are a highly effective way to share your perspective on mental health with a wider audience.

A letter to the editor must be brief, around 150 words. Check the publication's website for guidelines on length and how to submit your letter, as they may be quite different for a daily newspaper versus an academic journal. You can usually find this information on the page where the letters appear, or in a "contact us" section of the website.

Since letters to the editor are usually brief, it's best to pick one key message or argument from our talking points as your focus. You may want to cite one or two relevant statistics, but be sure your letter is not just a litany of facts. Letters that include evocative language and strong opinions are more likely to be published.

Letters to the editor should be submitted in a timely manner. For a daily newspaper, this means within a day or two of an article being published. Weekly or monthly publications may take more time to consider letters.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Here are some tweets. The link goes to our position statement on discrimination against transgender people.

- We support laws that protect the civil rights of transgender people. <http://apapsy.ch/transgender-discrimination>
- Laws and policies that discriminate against #LGBT community are harmful to #mentalhealth. <http://apapsy.ch/transgender-discrimination>

- Being transgender implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability. Transgender people deserve civil rights protections. <http://apapsy.ch/transgender-discrimination>
- Discrimination and lack of equal civil rights is damaging to #mentalhealth. Transgender people deserve civil rights protections. <http://apapsy.ch/transgender-discrimination>
- No burden of proof should be placed upon transgender people that is greater than that imposed on anyone else. <http://apapsy.ch/transgender-discrimination>