No Pride Without Trans Youth

What we (trans youth) saw, felt, + learned this Spring 2021 Legislative Session

GJLP
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BYOC  Bring Your Own Chair to the table
Throughout the 2021 State Legislative session, state after state introduced legislation that directly targets transgender young people and attempted to limit our freedom. This session followed 2020’s anti-trans legislation wave that had focused on restricting trans peoples’ access to facilities like restrooms. While conservative leaders using policy to hurt trans communities is nothing new, we’ve seen a recent narrowing of focus onto trans youth.

A year and a half into a global pandemic, state leaders have decided that this is the right time to make it a crime for a doctor to provide healthcare to trans youth. Policymakers have also decided to prioritize a flawed and recycled debate over fairness in sports in order to justify banning trans athletes from playing alongside our peers. These kinds of attacks are neither random or coincidental.

Do you remember Betsy Devos? Under her leadership, the US Department of Education made it clear that it would not investigate complaints from trans students, helping the then-president set the stage for these continued attacks on trans students. Political attacks like this take advantage of the fact that many people may not know much about transgender folks in order to create fear and divide us.

Imagine what it would look like if we showed up by the thousands and said: “Actually no. You can’t just throw doctors in jail for treating patients!” and “Let them play or we’re voting you out!” When we dream of the future, we’re united in liberation. To get there, we must be united now, and this means getting clear on what is happening and how to be in solidarity with trans youth.

Over the next few pages, we’re breaking it down: ⭐️ What was seen and learned during the session ⭐️ What trans youth are saying and feeling, and ⭐️ How we can get and stay ready for a future where we #ShowUp4TransYouth.

Newly appointed Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona has promised to get back on track with his Department’s role in protecting the rights of all students. (& we’re down to be part of that conversation... if you’re reading this Secretary Cardona!)
What kinds of policy bills were introduced this session?
Policymakers introduced bills that aimed to: prohibit healthcare for transgender youth, restrict access to gendered facilities (like restrooms), exclude trans youth from athletics, increase restrictions on ID documents, and more.

The most common bills focused on trans athlete bans and gender-affirming healthcare bans.

How many states? ...and how many bills?
So far, over 33 states have introduced a combined total of 150 anti-trans bills, including 75 athlete bans and 40 healthcare bans.

How many bills have passed?
As of June 2021, over 20 bills that may impact trans youth have passed their respective houses and are going to or have made it to the governor's desk.

Anti-trans Bills Introduced Spring 2021

Any links to some of these bad bills?

Yes, we got you. Click the little cute icons on a state for the related bill. Text links.
These bills have made it clear for young people: we must fix the world around us because the adults in power aren’t going to. This is disheartening, but it has also created a generation of change makers.

What happens in states where bills passed?
This is when we wish our high school government teachers actually taught the information that stuck. In short: even when bad bills are passed (and signed into law), the fight isn’t over. State and national legal organizations (like the ACLU) are prepared and ready to sue every state government that has passed anti-trans bills and fight against them in court. This process and the legal proceedings can also pause anti-trans laws from becoming enacted, which means the rights of trans folk are protected under current law.

Why were these bills introduced? Are they connected to past years?
Historically, trans people have been targeted through legislation in order to promote false narratives about who we are and to create fear amongst non-trans people. We saw this fear-mongering in 2020 during a wave of anti-trans bills mainly focused on limiting our access to restrooms. When fear is created, it is easier to justify increasing the policing of trans people, our bodies, and our lives. As trans and nonbinary people build community power, those in state power attempt to limit our access to some of our most basic needs in an attempt to push our progress backward and tighten their grip on the nation. These bills block us from affirming healthcare, playing sports with our peers, being safe while we use restrooms, receiving our birth certificates with correct information, and more. Trans youth are even more vulnerable to legislative attacks since the majority of us can't even vote for those debating our rights.
Will these bills come back?
As long as we continue to build #TransPower, state power holders will try to get in our way. In the past years, most of these attempts were unsuccessful in becoming law. In 2021 we saw bills pass in multiple states. It is likely that right-wing policymakers will continue to try and use legislation to target the freedoms of trans and queer people, especially Black & brown trans and queer youth; this year’s increase in anti-trans and anti-queer bills also points to a predictable upward trend.

What do we do?
In order to #ShowUp4TransYouth and win against these attacks, we need our people to listen to and honor the solutions called for by trans young people, ourselves. Keep on reading to hear exactly this!

Comic art by @DXTROSE
(Nat’l Trans Youth Council Youth Alumni, too!)
Here's what we would add to this conversation

if someone had actually asked us...

Legislative sessions like this can be scary because not only is transphobia happening in an interpersonal way from our peers and community, but it's also now backed by the government. It feels as if not only are we outcasted socially, but yes... it is in writing that we are seen as different under the law. But we're fighting back. We have to.

Bug (they/she) Nevada

To my representatives: you are harming real students. You are harming not only the young people who are trans and trying to be out and safe at school, but you're harming every student who will explore their gender in the future... who might be seeing all of this and questioning whether they can even think about gender outside of what they've been taught. You are harming so many more people than you realize. There are people who are just wanting to live their lives and we are not your enemies. We are just trying to be ourselves and what we are beautiful.

Jayy (they/them) Florida
I am a trans athlete!
I might not look like one *giggles* but I am a trans athlete!
Sports are a part of who I am.
The feeling of being on a team is amazing and being the person who I want to be is so freeing. Let me be.
Ash (xe/la) Illinois

I fear sometimes that I will experience violence when I'm outside my home. But I try not to dwell on those fears. It's scary being a trans person in this world already, let alone when the US government is writing our death into law. But I don't dwell on that fear because I can't live my life in fear of being me! I just can't. It would destroy me... and it has already kept me down me long enough. I am not going to let it destroy me anymore, you know? I'm gonna go ahead and keep living in my little fantasia! I'm the moment.
Amayas (they/them) Colorado
All the flawed arguments that politicians try to use fade away when you’re looking in the face of a trans person... the lies just don’t make much sense when you’re actually looking at me. A person. Yes, a person who is simply trans.

I didn’t feel like I belonged at my high school so much that I went to a different one part-time. I felt like skipping every day at my old school, but this one was different... I felt affirmed and engaged and interested. My old high school had security guards at every door, but this school just focused on helping us find something that we love doing.

For me, it’s music. And wanna know the wildest part? I felt so much safer there.

Jace (he/him) North Carolina

It can make it almost impossible to live your life as a young person when you don’t even have your basic needs met. Then these layers of privacy invasion?? It’s never okay to put someone through nonconsensual exams, especially kids.

We are literally just trying to live.

Ky Claude (they/them) Ohio
To keep trans youth alive, thriving and fighting for liberation, solidarity must exist in many ways. This requires us to find the best way to help out in ways that are within our abilities+talents+resources, as well as, aligned with what impacted folks (trans youth, in this case) have asked for.

From conversations with trans youth leaders, this is starting place for our people who are dedicated to trans (youth) liberation.

"Hey! It's Clippy. (Remember me?) I'm back with a tip: It looks like we're starting with solidarity focused on policy (since this is about anti-trans bills... but remember:
- There are so many ways to #ShowUp4TransYouth in addition to policy demands
- ...AND we offer many of these possibilities over the next few pages. Weeeeeee! "

Demand your rep at every level support trans youth
Educate + mobilize your people about anti-trans bills
Center + uplift trans youth voices everyday all day!
Commit to unlearning + relearning some things

Be down to learn from young people
Recognize ableism + make our work accessible to all disabled trans youth

Fight for trans youth self-determination + respect for all young people’s bodies

Indicate to the young people around you that you support trans youth. Make it clear that you are down for our success!
Ashleigh Illinois

Hire us

Invest in our

Offer guidance for our

Support our

Cheer on our

...Growth...

Support Black & Indigenous leadership
Support youth-organized spaces (like GSAs!)
Connect us with opportunities to learn new + useful skills
Support access to learning materials
AAA (books, PDFs, trainings)

Invest in our leadership + professional development
HELP
KEEP US SAFE
Offer food, housing
Support GoFundMes
Fund safe public transportation
Foster + adopt us
Abolish the police (especially @ school!)
Interrupt transphobia from family and friends

BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS WITH US
Mentor trans youth
Foster Intergenerational Connections
Create spaces for trans youth to meet
Connect & Check-in

I heard the question, what is visibility without protection? Trans people should have it all. We shouldn’t just strive for representation on the screen, we deserve to feel safe and have laws that protect us. I don’t think this is radical. It’s not a radical thing to say trans people should be in control of our bodies.
Imani (they/them) Ohio
MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO THRIVE

As an adult, the best thing you can do is listen. And then ask yourself: how can I create a more supportive environment for trans youth? Not how can I fix how you’re feeling, but more like how I can support you on your journey of being the person you want to be.

Ash (trans) Illinois

BELIEVE IN US (LIKE.. ACTUALLY BELIEVE IN US)

Support access to mental health resources
Love trans youth
Offer to coach us on sustaining self
Create moments that spark joy with us
Love trans youth
Help us experiment w/passion projects
Love trans youth
Encourage us to dream BIG
Love trans youth

Ask us what we think about things going on in this world

Listen + uplift what we have to say

Believe trans youth who are survivors of violence
Honor trans youth expertise
Resources 4 Continued Building

Click the links below (!) and together, we can build a safer future for all of us.

GJLP Website

GJLP Twitter

GJLP Instagram

Join the Roses Youth Council

Storytelling Toolkit 4 Trans Youth Interested in Sharing their Story

#Love

Letters 4 Trans Youth

LOVE

Trans Agenda 4 Liberation

Black Trans Travel Fund

Trans Law Center
I believe that there's a big future out there with a lot of beautiful things...

Octavia St. Laurent