

Rep. Gaetz says transgender rights bill would let Trump declare himself the ‘first female president’

By Felicia Sonmez
April 2 at 8:44 PM

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) on Tuesday voiced concern about a transgender rights bill under consideration by a House committee, arguing that the measure could allow President Trump to declare himself the “first female president.”

Gaetz, one of Trump’s most vocal defenders on Capitol Hill, is known for making incendiary statements. He was speaking at a hearing on H.R. 5, the “[Equality Act](#),” which would prohibit discrimination against gay and transgender individuals in housing, use of public spaces, employment and other areas.

Gaetz [said at the hearing](#) that while he supports the rights of transgender people and “will not denigrate or deny their existence or their struggles,” he believes the bill as written “would only nominally protect certain individuals while causing tremendous harm to others.”

“What happens when sex is defined as gender identity, and gender identity is terribly vague?” Gaetz asked. “Will all sex-based distinctions be erased? . . . Would grants for female-led businesses or programs for women in STEM fields suddenly be open to all persons, whether they believe or not that they identify as a woman?”

He added that he does not believe that the majority of all transgender people are “exploiting” their gender identity but that there are some “bad actors” who could take advantage of the law for their own benefit.

“Consider this possibility: If President Trump were to say, ‘I am now the first female president,’ who would celebrate that?” Gaetz asked. “Would those who support the legislation think that’s a good thing or would they be dismayed? Bad actors have already weaponized some ostensible equality laws for their own benefit.”

Luke Ball, Gaetz’s press secretary, said in a statement that the congressman brought up the example of Trump “to highlight the consequences of the poor language used in H.R. 5.”

“Congressman Gaetz stated in his remarks today that no one should face discrimination based on their sex, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity,” Ball said, adding that Gaetz’s concern that the legislation would be misused prevents him from supporting it.