

'We're just people': As care ban becomes law, trans Floridians face excruciating decisions

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Rito Hendrix is trying not to panic.

After knowing he was transgender since childhood, the 31-year-old finally built up the courage to start hormone replacement therapy. He visited a Planned Parenthood clinic near his home in rural Loxahatchee in Palm Beach County and began taking shots of testosterone.

Just three months in, "I'm the happiest I've ever been in my life," Hendrix said recently.

But [on Wednesday](#), with the stroke of Gov. Ron DeSantis' pen, access to that gender-affirming health care for Hendrix and thousands of adults across Florida is in jeopardy.

Republican leaders across the country have banned minors from accessing transition-related care, going against the guidance of major health authorities including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization.

[Senate Bill 254](#) lays out a new informed-consent process that requires patients 18 and over who are seeking gender-affirming care to see a physician in person. That means new patients and some existing patients can't use telehealth or other health care providers such as nurse practitioners.

The bill includes a carveout for prescription renewals, but providers and experts had different interpretations over whether existing patients can receive refills without going through the new informed-consent process. That ambiguity may prompt providers to stop gender-affirming care altogether, advocates say.

The legislation also has a range of insurance restrictions: governments and public colleges and universities can't spend state money on gender-affirming care, nor can the state Medicaid program.

The result is massive barriers to care for trans adults, advocates say. The bill has caused panic among providers who could face a misdemeanor if they violate the law and among trans Floridians whose fears that youth health care bans were just the beginning are now being realized.

"It's yet another way to slowly creep in further and further laws that want to kick trans people out of the state or otherwise have them eliminated completely within the state," Hendrix said.

The measure was one of four bills targeting the LGBTQ community that DeSantis signed into law Wednesday. He announced the bills from a Christian school in Tampa, behind a lectern with a sign that read, "Let kids be kids."

"It is important that we stand up for our youth," DeSantis said, "and we're doing that in a number of ways here today."

He only briefly touched on the adult restrictions, a 9-second blip amid a 30-minute news conference. His office did not return a request for comment Wednesday.

Also on Wednesday, three Florida parents [asked a federal judge](#) to block enforcement of the law as part of an [ongoing lawsuit](#) against a transgender youth care ban adopted this year by the Florida Board of Medicine. Along with the adult care restrictions, Senate Bill 254 codified the Board of Medicine youth ban into law.