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Wilson OKs new transgender bathroom policy

It's a step in the right direction, say some Berks students.

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In recent years, there has been contentious debate over public bathroom use by students who identify as transgender.

Should a transgender person use the bathroom of the gender they were born with, or the facility of the gender to which they now identify?

As schools across the country grapple with the decision, Wilson School District has stepped up to make the school day easier for transgender students.

Effective Jan. 8, transgender students will be able to use restrooms that correspond to their gender identities under a new policy at Wilson.

Angela Bagenstose, a senior at Muhlenberg, thinks that this move by Wilson is a great idea.

"Being forced to use a bathroom of the sex you were born as could be uncomfortable when you don't feel that is your gender," Angela said.

Alivia Haines, another senior at Muhlenberg, said she hopes that other schools will start to implement the same policies.

"I want to see more public schools start to advocate for transgender (students) to be treated as equals," Alivia said.

Wilson's policy, similar to one in Exeter School District, comes as a transgender policy in the Boyertown schools is being challenged in court. Dr. Richard Faidley, Wilson's superintendent, was superintendent in Boyertown when a lawsuit challenging that district's transgender policy was filed last year, according to *Reading Eagle* reports.

Four Boyertown High School students and their parents sued the district for allowing transgender students to use restrooms and locker rooms according to their gender identity rather than their birth sex. An appeal in that case is pending.

Chloe Ohlinger, a junior at Muhlenberg, said she thinks the policy will still hurt transgender students, because of the potential of ridicule from others as they use the bathroom of their

choice.

"So it may not really fix anything," Chloe said.

According to *Reading Eagle* reports, the policy only applies to bathrooms and came about because of one student whose parents requested and approved of the change. However, Wilson students say they know of several of their peers who identify as transgender and could take advantage of the new policy.

To request the accommodation, students are asked to contact their building principal or school counselor, according to *Reading Eagle* reports. Access to locker rooms will be decided on a case-by-case basis, the district said.

<http://www.readingeagle.com/voices/article/wilson-oks-new-transgender-bathroom-policy>