

U.S. warns states against treading on civil rights of transgender youths

The Justice Department warning comes as Republican-controlled states have been enacting a variety of bills aimed squarely at trans youths.

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By Reuters

The U.S. Justice Department on Thursday sent a letter to states warning them against passing legislation that would discriminate against transgender youth, including measures that would ban them from seeking gender-affirming treatments.

The warning from the department's top civil rights lawyer comes at a time when Republican-controlled states around the country have been enacting a variety of bills aimed squarely at transgender youth.

"Intentionally erecting discriminatory barriers to prevent individuals from receiving gender-affirming care implicates a number of federal legal guarantees," wrote Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke, in a letter to state attorneys general.

"State laws and policies that prevent parents or guardians from following the advice of a healthcare professional regarding what may be medically necessary or otherwise appropriate care for transgender minors may infringe on rights protected by both the Equal Protection and the Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment."

Clarke's letter, which was timed with the International Transgender Day of Visibility, comes at a time when civil rights organizations are challenging a new directive by Texas Governor Greg Abbott targeting transgender youth.

His directive ordered the state's Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) to investigate parents who provide their children with gender-transitioning medical treatments, claiming that providing such treatment amounted to abuse.

A Texas appeals court earlier this month temporarily blocked the law from going into effect until litigation over the matter is resolved.

Meanwhile, earlier in March, other states have also enacted a variety of measures targeting transgender youth, with Arizona and Oklahoma both passing bills that ban transgender students from competing in girls' sports.

"Transgender individuals deserve to be able to live free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and threats of violence," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement on Thursday.