



Statement about Anti-Trans Laws and policies (4/16/21)

Dear Health Behavior Department community,

We are writing today to condemn policies attacking transgender (trans) youth, to name anti-trans discrimination and violence as critical public health issues, and to affirm our support for trans and non-binary students, staff and faculty in the School. As many of you know, several states, including North Carolina, are currently considering legislation to ban trans youth from competing on teams that match their gender identity. Other states are enacting legislation to ban gender-affirming medical care. The justification for these discriminatory policies is often based on the false notion that they are designed protect youth – arguing it is unfair for cisgender girls to have to compete with trans girls, and that gender transition treatments are too medically risky. Yet there is little basis to these claims – [no science](#) indicates that trans girls have a competitive advantage, and physician groups, including the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), support gender-affirming care. Given the physical and mental health benefits of both participation in sports and gender-affirming healthcare, these policies have the potential to cause great harm and expand health inequities among trans people.

Furthermore, these policies represent just two of many ways that trans people are marginalized in our society. Other structural barriers exist to employment, housing, child custody, military service and even securing government-issued ID cards; most of these barriers result from anti-trans legislation, or failure of protective legislation to pass or be enforced. As leaders of our department we are committed to learning more and identifying strategies to improve our training around trans health, and ensuring a constructive and healthy environment for trans members of our community.

Finally, we want to recognize that trans people of color experience particularly high levels of discrimination and marginalization. The work that we do to reduce structural inequities for trans people requires attention to the intersections of gender and race, and continued efforts to end racism.

To that end, we want to acknowledge that we are all once again reeling and angered from the killings of Daunte Wright, just miles from the trial of Derek Chauvin, and Adam Toledo in Chicago. While much of that media narrative focuses on the specific actions and intentions of the officers involved, the pattern of police violence that we witness over and over again -- like the patterns we observe in trans health inequities -- remind us that we must address the policies and programs that produce these patterns in order to generate lasting change.

We understand that this continues to be a challenging time for many and want to do our best to offer social support and resources to members of our Health Behavior community. We welcome individuals to connect with their faculty mentors, academic advisors, supervisors or members of our leadership team.

Health Behavior Leadership Team

Shelley Golden, Vice Chair for Academic Affairs

Clare Barrington, Doctoral Program Director

Liz Chen, HB MPH Concentration Lead

Kurt M. Ribisl, Chair

P.S. We would like to thank the first year HB MPH students for telling us this statement was needed. We appreciate the feedback, and continue to work to proactively identify and address current issues needing attention.

