



Hi, friend!

As we move through the second half of the legislative session, we have less than two weeks left for committee hearings to take place on surviving bills. Legislators have passed many bills through committees at this point and several are making it through the second chamber and are even on their way to Governor Holcomb's desk.

This week's Sound-off is a long one:

We are so disappointed to see legislators continue to pass harmful bills impacting Hoosier youth in the LGBTQ community. Below is more information on those bills along with a call to action for Hoosiers to take action to oppose this legislation. These attacks on the LGBTQ community are further disappointing, especially when we see data in the 2023 Kids Count Databook that tells us that [nearly a quarter of Indiana's LGBTQ youth have attempted suicide.](#)

There is an opportunity for a [rally at the Statehouse to protect trans youth](#) taking place TOMORROW MORNING, Saturday, April 1. (More on that, below!)

Some positive bills are making their way towards the finish line that include increasing family access to TANF, increasing access to contraceptives, increasing student enrollment in the Twenty First Century Scholars Program, and more.

Read on to see what else happened this week at the Statehouse.

Sarah



LGBTQ Youth

[SB480, "Gender Transition Procedures for Minors,"](#) passed its third reading (65-30) in the full House Chamber and has now been sent to Gov. Holcomb for further review. This bill would prohibit physicians or practitioners from knowingly providing gender transition procedures to a minor and to ban other gender affirming care like puberty blockers and hormone therapy.

Although, medical experts agree that these procedures are lifesaving, and denying someone access to this healthcare could result in worsening mental health conditions and even suicide. Advocacy Director, Katie Blair from the ACLU stated, "politicians harm us all when they ignore medical judgment and block access to standard care in favor of discriminatory fearmongering."

We'll let the ACLU-IN's Executive Director, Jane Henegar cut through some of the common myths about gender affirming care for youth in Indiana. [Read her full commentary here.](#) She states:

Indiana medical experts are not performing genital procedures on minors. No hospitals anywhere throughout Indiana are performing these surgeries on minors, nor are they recommended by the standards of care doctors follow.

Being transgender is not a "social contagion." It is not "catching." With increasing acceptance of gender differences, young people feel safer to be open about their gender identity. Trans youth feel more comfortable being themselves.

Puberty blockers have been widely used for decades and are prescribed with care. Doctors, mental health professionals and parents carefully and collaboratively decide when a child needs hormone therapy. These drugs delay the onset of puberty to give teens time to decide if they want to pursue further treatments.

Regretting gender affirming care is extremely low. Advocates for this bill have been citing one flawed study from 2013, with a very small sample size, to claim that there is a very high desistance rate among youth who transition. In other words, that youth often "change their mind." Although, [recent, peer-reviewed studies](#) have concluded "that the rate of desistance is small and outweighed by the benefits of treatment."

[Read more about SB480's passage out of the House of Representatives.](#)

Click on the link below to contact Governor Holcomb and tell him to VETO SB480 in order to protect trans youth and parental rights to provide this life-saving medical care.

ACT NOW



Indiana's Don't Say Gay Bill

As mentioned last week, Indiana's version of the Don't Say Gay bill, [HB 1608](#), has been sent to the full Senate Chamber for further review after passing out of the Senate Education and Career Development Committee.

HB 1608 would effectively ban discussion or acknowledgement of LGBTQ people in schools under the guise of banning conversations around "human sexuality." This bill would require teachers to get parental permission in order to call a student by a preferred name or pronoun. HB 1608 also allows for school staff to misgender and deadname trans students, even if the student's parents request that the school recognizes their child's chosen name and pronouns.

Earlier this week, MCCOY was proud to join The Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) along with other education advocates in our state and sent a letter to the full Senate urging them to vote "NO" on HB 1608.

MCCOY vehemently opposes this bill because it erases LGBTQ+ families and children from being seen and affirmed in the classroom and endangers young trans students by requiring administration to "out" them to their parents before using their pronouns.

[READ THE LETTER](#)



Rally to Protect Trans Youth

- **THIS Saturday, April 1**
- **Indiana Statehouse**
- **Doors Open at 10am, Rally starts at 11am**

Join our friends at the ACLU of Indiana **TOMORROW MORNING, Saturday, April 1**, at the Indiana Statehouse, to let lawmakers know, LGBTQ youth in Indiana deserve the support and care necessary to give them the same chance to thrive as their peers.

[SB 480](#), a ban on gender affirming care, passed a final vote Monday and is heading to the Governor's desk, and several other bills including [HB 1608](#), a Don't Say Gay bill that includes forced outing, are still on the move.

This could be our last chance to show Indiana lawmakers that Hoosiers support the LGBTQ community and we will not stand by quietly while Governor Holcomb signs this harmful legislation into law.

[Learn more](#)



21st Century Scholars Program

HB 1449 "Twenty-first century scholars' program" received a hearing on Thursday in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

If passed, this bill would require the commission for higher education to notify eligible students who qualify for enrollment in the twenty-first century scholars program. Currently, about half of eligible students do not apply for the program on time and miss out on the opportunity to have their college expenses covered. Enrollment in the 21st Century Scholars program would help students have more educational opportunities that could change the trajectory of their adult lives. MCCOY supports any efforts to help lift children out of poverty through the power of education.

[READ MORE](#)



Police Interrogation

SB 415, Admissibility of a Statement by Juvenile in Custody, passed 12-1 in the House Courts and Criminal Code Committee on Wednesday and will now be sent to the full House Chamber for a second reading.

This bill would protect youth against deceptive police interrogation tactics. Additionally, the bill requires school personnel to make an effort to notify parents in case a child is removed from school because they have been arrested.

MCCOY supports this bill because it will protect children from potential wrongful convictions and will improve trust between police and the community.

[READ MORE](#)



Birth Control

HB 1568, "Prescription for Hormonal Contraceptives," received a hearing in the Senate Health and Provider Services on Wednesday and passed 8-2. This bill would allow pharmacists who meet certain requirements to prescribe and dispense birth control. This and other bills regarding easing access to birth control were developed as a direct result of the special session last summer on banning abortion in Indiana. The authors of HB 1568 are all women and represent both parties. Author, Rep. Elizabeth Rowray said, "We thought that having access to hormonal contraceptives as readily available as possible would be one step in making sure we didn't have those unintended pregnancies."

MCCOY supports this bill and believes that contraceptives of all kinds should be made as easily available to Hoosiers who need or want them.

The bill will now be sent to the full Senate Chamber for a second reading.



Science of Reading

Science of Reading

HB 1558, "Science of Reading," received a hearing in the Senate Education and Career Development Committee on Wednesday and is being held for further review. If passed, this bill would establish funding to place literacy instruction coaches in elementary schools, as well as obtain reading training for teachers throughout Indiana. The author of this bill, Rep. Jake Teshka, stated the importance of how we instruct reading, mentioning that 20% of Hoosier children are not reading proficiently and that the lack of proficiency in reading leads to a higher rate of students dropping out of school. All testimonies heard in committee were in support of the bill. Although, some advocates were concerned that this bill does not go far enough to ensure sustainable and equitable funding for such standards.

MCCOY supports HB 1558 because it would allow more children in Indiana to become proficient in reading, giving them a better chance for success as they grow.

[LEARN MORE](#)



TANF

TANF

SB 265, "TANF Eligibility," passed out of House Ways and Means Committee this week with a vote of 20-1. This bill would raise the income limit to qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and would automatically adjust to inflation. Indiana currently has one of the strictest thresholds in the country. Currently in Indiana, more than 66,000 families in Indiana fall below the 50% of the poverty line threshold. Of those, only 4,300 receive TANF benefits.

MCCOY supports expanding TANF eligibility because it will help lift families in need out of poverty.



Undocumented Immigrant Students

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SB 135, "Eligibility for Resident Tuition" died earlier this session in the Senate Committee on Education and Career Development on February 1st, never receiving a vote. This bill would have allowed undocumented immigrant students to become eligible for in-state tuition if they have attended Indiana schools for four years and either graduated or received the equivalent of a high school diploma. Senator Blake Doriot, one of the authors of the bill, stated that given its critical need for workers, the state should help students who want to go to college. Indiana lawmakers declining to move forward with SB 135 will keep the cost of college unreasonably high for undocumented immigrant students. As one undocumented student mentioned, "there's not a lot of room to dream."

MCCOY is disappointed to see that this legislation died, but we will support efforts in the future to bring back legislation that will support educational opportunities for youth living with an undocumented status.

READ MORE

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