Why Transgender Equity Is Critical to Ending the HIV Epidemic

Amid attacks against transgender people's civil rights and access to health care, here's how you can help pass the Equality Act.

March 31, 2021 By AIDS United

On this International Transgender Day of Visibility, March 31, AIDS United renews our call for the full equality of transgender, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming individuals.

These communities have seen cruel attacks on their right to health care in state legislatures in recent weeks. The attacks in South Dakota, Arkansas and Alabama have been nothing short of hateful and will cause significant harm to these communities.

Many others witnessed those in political power question their right to participate in sports during a hearing regarding the Equality Act (H.R. 5).

These attacks are wrong. These attacks are dangerous. Access to health care should not be inhibited by the choices of representatives.

We have long known that the fight for transgender justice is a key component of health equity and our work to end the HIV epidemic in the United States. Everyone deserves to have access to quality, affirming and respectful health care.

But we have significant work to do.

Nearly two-thirds of all transgender men and women surveyed in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System had never been tested for HIV. It is estimated that 14% of transgender women are living with HIV. It is also estimated that Black transgender women carry the burden of these diagnoses, accounting for 44% of all transgender women living with HIV.

Providing gender-affirming care to transgender individuals is a lifesaving act.

According to a study by the University of California- Los Angeles' Williams Institute on suicidal thoughts and actions of transgender adults, 51% of respondents had attempted suicide in the last year. Providing trans-affirming care lowers the risk of suicide for transgender patients.

In young adults and teens, prescribing puberty blockers reduces the community's disproportionate

risk for suicidal thoughts and ideation. Referring to someone using their correct pronouns and name also lowers this risk. It is crucial that medical providers be able to provide this care without excessive government interference.

Passing the Equality Act would ensure that transgender individual's civil rights and access to health care are not just based on their ZIP code, but fully protected by federal law. We need you to reach out to your Senators to ensure that the Equality Act passes. We must continue to speak out for transgender equity not just this Trans Day of Visibility, but every single day of the year.

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