

# TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

No one should be denied a job, a place to live, or access to a public place or business simply because of who they are. Unfortunately, these kinds of rejection are all too common for transgender people.

Thanks to the committed and courageous work of transgender Iowans and allies, Iowa has strong protections on the books. The Iowa Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, which were added as protected characteristics in 2007. The ICRA has also long protected against sex-based discrimination, which includes discrimination based on sex-based stereotypes and gender norms.

The ACLU of Iowa has secured some historic wins for transgender rights in Iowa, including filing lawsuits to strike down as unconstitutional the state's practice of denying Medicaid coverage for medically necessary, gender-affirming transgender surgery. Although some of these lawsuits are ongoing, the ACLU of Iowa is committed to fighting this discrimination as long as it takes.

A timeline of the ACLU of Iowa's past work on securing the rights of transgender Iowans can be found [here](#).

## ACLU OF IOWA POSITION

Transgender people belong in Iowa and they deserve to be treated with the same respect and equal treatment as anyone else. The ACLU champions transgender people's right to live free from discrimination. We're working tirelessly to preserve and strengthen transgender Iowans' rights in employment, housing, and public places.

Legislation that singles out transgender people for discrimination violates guarantees of equal protection in both the Iowa and federal constitutions. The introduction of discriminatory legislation only increases the social isolation and stigma that transgender people face, contributing to self-harm and suicide risk, particularly for transgender youth.

We're committed to advocating for clear and unequivocal protections in the law, taking legal actions under the laws that already exist, and fervently defending transgender peoples' rights when those rights are threatened.

## LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The Iowa Legislature has repeatedly and aggressively attacked these protections over the past several years. A record 15 anti-transgender bills were introduced during the 2021 legislative session. But thanks to organizations, individuals, and committed legislators raising their voices in opposition, none of these bills became law.

Unfortunately, this anti-transgender legislative trend continues. Bills that could impact transgender students' rights to participate in sports, school curriculum changes for teaching gender identity, and access to health care options specifically for transgender children are all likely to be introduced.

*Update as of November 2021.*

HAVE A QUESTION?

Email us at [outreach@aclu-ia.org](mailto:outreach@aclu-ia.org).

**ACLU**  
Iowa