

Sen. Larson: GOP members of JCRAR show contempt for LGBTQIA+ community with vote to block medical care for transgender patients

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Madison, WI – Just one day after the State Senate voted to restrict a woman’s right to safe, legal abortion in Wisconsin, legislative Republicans voted in committee to block transgender individuals participating in Medicaid from receiving needed medication and hormone therapies. In so doing, they would keep Wisconsin statute in non-compliance with a federal court order prohibiting this type of discrimination.

The Department of Health Services (DHS) rule the GOP voted to block – CR20-063, approved by the Governor on June 10th of this year – would bring administrative code into compliance with the 2019 court order in the case *Flack vs. the Department of Health Services*, which permanently enjoined the state from enforcing an outdated and discriminatory 1996 rule that excluded gender-affirming care from Medicaid coverage and declared such care “medically unnecessary.”

There are approximately 152,000 transgender Medicaid enrollees in the United States, and many of them receive medication or hormone therapy at some point in their lives. That legislative Republicans would seek to deny them this care – even if it means violating a federal injunction – shows not just a lack of moral character but a lack of understanding of how our country works.

It is unclear if this action will have any binding effect, as DHS is currently forbidden from enforcing the existing ban on gender-affirming coverage, but it does send a signal to our transgender neighbors that some elected officials do not value them as full and equal members of our society. Combined with the GOP-sponsored bills currently being debated that seek to ban transgender youth from participating in sports as a member of their identified gender, it becomes even clearer where Republicans stand when it comes to human rights.

Whether it's a woman's right to a safe, legal abortion, a trans person's right to gender-affirming treatment, or the right of every Wisconsinite to be free of a deadly pandemic, it's clear Wisconsin Republicans are on the wrong side of science and medicine, and we deserve far better.