

# Assembly GOP passes bills banning gender-affirming care for youth, transgender women from women's school sports

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The Assembly today approved along party lines a bill to ban gender-affirming care for minors and two bills to prohibit transgender women from participating in women's school sports.

Dems argued the bills are discriminatory as Dem Gov. Tony Evers has vowed to veto them.

The GOP-run chamber approved 63-35 along party lines AB 465, which would ban gender-affirming care for those under 18.

The chamber also approved both AB 377 and 378 in 63-35 party-line votes. The two bills together would ban transgender women athletes in K-12 schools and colleges from playing sports designated for those assigned female at birth.

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Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer in a floor speech shared comments from her transgender sister, who said her life would not have been worth living if she couldn't transition.

Neubauer also noted today's debate marked the anniversary of Matthew Shepard's murder. Shepard was a gay University of Wyoming student who was tortured and murdered in 1998.

"We are here on the floor to debate legislation based on those same sentiments:

hate and fear,” the Racine Dem said. “The significance of this anniversary should not be lost on any of us as we’re debating legislation that would have drastic consequences for kids in similar situations to Matthew Shepard and for people across our state.”

Rep. Janel Brandtjen rejected the characterization of the bills as hateful.

“I doubt anybody in this building ... has any hate for any of these children,” the Menomonee Falls Republican said. “And I think that the sooner we take that off the table, we can start having a conversation. Nobody has hate in this building. Because we disagree, because we disagree with the process, does not make hate.”

Dems argued the potential ban on gender-affirming care would harm transgender youth by not allowing them to express their gender identity.

Rep. Melissa Ratcliff, whose son is transgender and has received gender-affirming care, called the bill “disappointing” and “reprehensible.”

“My son and other members of our transgender community know exactly who they are,” the Cottage Grove Dem said. “And ultimately, that’s what the violent hatred and intolerance of this legislation and hate of our transgender community seeks to destroy: acceptance.”

Ratcliff argued gender-affirming care saves lives, and a lack of acceptance drives transgender youth to suicide.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos argued gender-affirming surgeries amount to child mutilation, arguing “no one in this chamber is hateful” and the legislation would protect kids.

“People 100 years ago thought the way to deal with mental illness was to lobotomize the mentally ill. That was settled science,” the Rochester Republican added.

Rep. Elijah Behnke said there needs to be an age limit for gender-affirming care, adding “let them go to work, get it done, drive a car, and lop off their nuts all at the same age. I don’t care.”

The Oconto Republican argued it doesn’t make sense to allow minors to make such decisions.

“So you’re not going to let a 7-year-old play with an AR-15, but you’re gonna let them play around with the decision of what to do with their body that can last their lifetime? Behnke said.

On the transgender sports bills, Rep. Kristina Shelton argued not allowing transgender kids to play the sport that matches their identity fosters inequality and prejudice. The Green Bay Dem, who said she was a student athlete, argued the bills aren’t the way to go about helping women athletes.

“I find it heart-wrenching and so distressing that supporting women’s sports has become critical to a population of people in this room who have without a doubt never really supported women’s sports at all,” Shelton said.

Rep. Barb Dittrich, who authored the two bills, said the measures are “compassionate” and not anti-trans, noting they include provisions for co-ed teams.

“If it were, there would be no third category. This is pro-woman legislation. And offering that is not an attempt to cancel or hate or eliminate trans people. The left is saying that — not us,” the Oconomowoc Republican said.