

# Evaluating the Protecting Children's Bodies Act: A Health Impact Review

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## Introduction

**House Bill 1214 (HB 1214)**, introduced in the Washington State (WA) Legislature during the 2023-2024 legislative session, is referred to as the **"Protecting Children's Bodies Act"**.

This bill aims to **reduce** the provision of **gender-affirming care** services to intersex, transgender and gender diverse **youth under 18 in WA**:

➤ **Affects a structurally vulnerable population:** transgender (trans), intersex, and gender diverse (TIGD) youth

➤ Specifically targets health care providers, proposing to **prevent providers from giving services** including **hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery, and puberty-blocking drugs**

Research has demonstrated that **bans on access to medically appropriate health care** adds to the burden of **stress** experienced by TIGD youth and their families, **restrict the work** that clinicians are safe, comfortable, and protected to perform and **discourages students and trainees** from pursuing desperately needed careers in **gender-affirming care** and transgender health.

### Snapshot: TIGD Youth in Washington State

- Face disproportionately higher rates of chronic conditions, including mental health issues (Reisner, et al., 2015).
- Experience increased substance use and sexual risk behaviors compared to the general population (Johns, et al., 2023).
- More likely to experience violence victimization, harassment, and abuse (Johns, et al., 2023).
- Face various forms of stigma, both structural and interpersonal (White Hughto, Reisner & Pachankis, 2015).
- Intersectionality with other marginalized identities exacerbates health threats (Boskey et al., 2023).

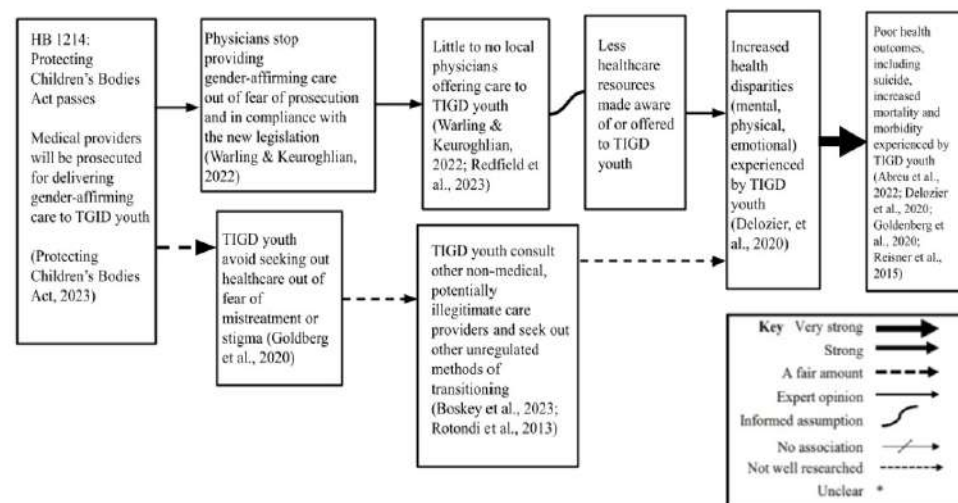
## Methods

➤ We reviewed **n=25** pieces of literature, ranging from expert opinion pieces to systematic reviews and meta-analyses, to examine the health effects of antitransgender legislation

➤ Using the **Washington State Board of Health (2021) criteria** for evaluating strength-of-evidence, we examined the existing literature to create a logic model highlighting the health impacts of HB 1214

➤ This HIR is an **objective, scientifically rigorous, summary of evidence** regarding the myriad health issues that TIGD youth face, in the face of bills that restrict access to medically sound gender-affirming care

## Logic Model



**Figure 1:** Concerning the Protecting Children's Body Act Proposed HB 1214

## Results

**HB 1214 will exacerbate existing health disparities and contribute to negative health outcomes among TIGD youth in Washington State.**

➤ Reduced access to gender-affirming care will lead to increased rates of **mental distress, gender dysphoria, and delayed medical intervention** among TIGD youth.

➤ TIGD youth will face increased risks of seeking **unregulated methods of transitioning**.

➤ Fear of **stigma** and **mistreatment** will further deter TIGD youth from accessing essential healthcare services.

➤ The legislation will lead to a **scarcity of healthcare providers** offering gender-affirming care, compounding existing barriers to access.

## Conclusions

**TIGD youth sitting at the intersection of different marginalized identities will be disproportionately negatively affected by HB 1214.**

➤ Access to gender-affirming care during adolescence is associated with improved health in adulthood

➤ HB 1214 has significant negative health impacts on TIGD youth, particularly **mental health impacts**

## Next Steps & Future Research

**Routine Health Impact Reviews should be undertaken with all forms of legislation, particularly ones that target marginalized communities**

➤ Health Impact Reviews can help how policies influence the health of communities from an objective, rigorous, scientific perspective

➤ Health Impact Reviews should not be solely limited to health-related legislation (e.g., healthcare), but to all types of legislation to evaluate population health impacts

➤ Protecting and enshrining access to gender-affirming care is crucial not only for the health of TIGD youth, but to the greater social networks and communities to which they belong

