

Biden Signs Measure to Protect L.G.B.T.Q. Rights, Citing ‘Hateful Attacks’

Michael D. Shear
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President Biden signed an executive order on Wednesday aimed at protecting L.G.B.T.Q. people from a cascade of legislation in conservative states that increasingly targets the rights of gays, lesbians, transgender youth and others.

The order is designed to counter efforts by Republican politicians like Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, who has pushed through a measure — called by some the “Don’t Say Gay” law — banning teachers from providing instruction regarding gender identity or sexual orientation.

Other laws passed in conservative states include prohibitions on transgender girls competing in high school sports and efforts to ban the provision of gender-affirming care. White House officials have called the new laws “un-American” and said they are designed to discriminate against families and children based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Mr. Biden’s executive order takes direct aim at so-called conversion therapy, a discredited therapy in which doctors falsely claim to be able to adjust a person’s gender identity or sexual orientation with treatment.

In a ceremony in the East Room packed with L.G.B.T.Q. supporters, Mr. Biden said he was moved to take action to prevent what he called “hateful attacks” by Republican governors and legislatures around the country.

“My order will use the full force of the federal government to prevent inhumane practices of conversion therapy,” Mr. Biden said, to loud applause from his supporters. “This the first time the federal government is leading a coordinated response against this dangerous discredited a practice.”

In the executive order, the president directs the secretary of health and human services and the secretary of state to lead an effort to limit exposure to the procedure on the part of American youth, and endeavor to end it altogether internationally. The order would also direct the Federal Trade Commission to determine whether conversion therapy amounts to a deceptive act that should merit warnings to consumers from the agency.

The order will also seek to expand access to suicide prevention and mental health resources for L.G.B.T.Q. people, White House officials said.

For Mr. Biden, the executive order is another step toward fulfilling promises he made to the L.G.B.T.Q. community during his presidential campaign in 2020.

At the time he vowed to make his administration “look like America” by appointing members of the L.G.B.T.Q. community to his staff and cabinet. He made good on that promise by choosing Pete Buttigieg, an openly gay man, as secretary of transportation and tapping Karine Jean-Pierre to be the first openly gay, Black woman to serve as his press secretary.

But Mr. Biden also vowed to take specific actions as president to promote equality. On his first day in office, he signed an executive order directing federal agencies to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity when it comes to health care, education, housing, employment and more.

The president’s announcement of a new executive order comes as the White House celebrates Pride Month. In his remarks on Wednesday, Mr. Biden repeated what he said a year ago during a similar event: “Pride is back at the White House.”

But White House officials said the decision to issue the executive order was also motivated by the increasing number of anti-L.G.B.T.Q. laws being passed by Republican state legislatures and signed into law by Republican governors.

Mr. Biden called it the “the ultra-MAGA agenda attacking families and our freedoms,” making reference to the Make America Great Again slogan that former President Donald J. Trump popularized during his first run for office in 2016.

In his remarks, Mr. Biden lamented the proliferation of attempts to limit or take away the rights of L.G.B.T.Q. people. He said that there was still a need to fight back against anti-L.G.B.T.Q. sentiment, despite the Supreme Court’s decision to legalize gay marriage in 2015.

“No one knows better than people in this room. We have a lot more work to do. A lot more to do,” he said. He noted that there are “300 discriminatory bills introduced in states across this country — in Texas, knocking on front doors to harass, investigate parents who are raising transgender children. In Florida, going after Mickey Mouse, for God’s sake.”

The crowd laughed at the president’s Disney reference. But Mr. Biden closed his remarks with a serious warning about the ideological divide in the country and the political fight that he said remains in the years ahead.

“We’re in a battle for the very soul of this nation, he said. “And that’s not hyperbole. We’re in a battle for the soul of the nation. Well, I look around this room here, and all you here today, it’s a battle I know we will win.”

He pounded his fist on the lectern: “We will win.”

Biden Seeks to Strengthen LGBT Protections With Executive Order

Catherine Lucey
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President Biden signed an executive order Wednesday aimed at improving protections for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people that includes efforts to counter GOP-led state laws regarding transgender youths.

The order charges the Department of Health and Human Services with “protecting LGBTQI+ children and families from attacks on their access to health care” and directs the department to release new policies for states on how to expand access to healthcare for those patients. The Democratic president is also asking the Education Department to release a sample school policy for “achieving full inclusion” for those students.

“My message to all the young people: Just be you. You are loved. You are heard. You are understood. You do belong,” Mr. Biden said before signing the bill at a White House ceremony attended by advocates and administration officials. “I want you to know that as your president, all of us on this stage have your back.”

According to the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBT lobbying and advocacy group, more than 300 bills were introduced in state legislatures in 2022 that target the LGBT community, with laws passed in states such as Alabama and Arizona.

Those laws include bans on transgender girls from competing in female sports at schools and on providing medical care such as hormone blockers and other treatments, as well as curriculum restrictions. The order focuses on healthcare access and school policies but doesn’t address sports bans specifically.

State legislators and governors who back such laws have often [said they protect religious freedom](#) or the rights of parents. Some of the laws and policies face legal challenges.

The White House described these state laws as discriminatory. The order “will send a powerful signal from the president of the United States to LGBTQI kids across the country who may be feeling scared and hopeless that their president has their back,”

a senior administration official said, using an extended acronym that includes queer and intersex people.

The move also seeks to reduce the practice known as “conversion therapy,” which attempts to change a person’s sexual orientation to heterosexual through psychological or spiritual means.

[The practice](#) is [opposed by](#) the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association as inhumane, harmful and not based in scientific evidence. It is banned in 20 states, according to Born Perfect, a program aimed at ending conversion therapy created by the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Religious-freedom advocacy groups have opposed such bans.

Under the order, Mr. Biden is charging HHS with leading an initiative to reduce exposure to conversion therapy. The department will explore guidance to clarify that federally funded programs can’t offer the practice and will increase public awareness around it.

Mr. Biden is also encouraging the Federal Trade Commission to consider whether conversion therapy is an unfair or deceptive practice and is directing the secretaries of State, Treasury and Health to develop a plan to end it around the world and ensure U.S. foreign aid doesn’t fund it.

The order seeks to increase resources for mental health and suicide prevention for LGBT youth. It also seeks to reduce discrimination against LGBT children and families, including in the foster-care system, housing and schools. It also directs HHS to create a “Bill of Rights” for older LGBT adults.

The official said the actions were being taken under the president’s authority, using existing resources.