

I am an author, PhD historian, journal editor, medical ethics writer and researcher. I've studied the history of how singling out vulnerable people groups leads to inequality and injustice. So, today I'm writing to voice my concern about a dangerous bill being heard in the House Public Health Policy Committee. HB 68, dubbed the so-called "SAFE Act," would harm the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. Please do not support this bill and vote no if it comes up for a vote. Gender affirming care saves lives. We have known this since the 1920s. I'm happy to provide the research.

The word "transgender" didn't enter the lexicon until 1971—but that is not where the history of trans rights begins. Operating at the turn of the 20th century, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld specialized in "sexual intermediaries," a term that included those who "from the point of view of their character," should be considered as the opposite sex. One soldier with whom Hirschfeld had worked described wearing women's clothing as the chance "to be a human at least for a moment." Perhaps even more surprising was Hirschfeld's inclusion of those with no fixed gender at all, akin to today's concept of gender fluid or non-binary identity. Most importantly for Hirschfeld, these men and women were acting "in accordance with their nature," not against it.

Current anti-trans sentiments center on the idea that transgender is both unnatural and new. This was no trend or fad, but a recognition that persons may be born with a nature contrary to their assigned gender. And, in cases where the desire to live as the opposite sex was strong, Hirschfeld thought science ought to provide a means of transition. He purchased a Berlin villa in early 1919 and opened the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Research) on 6 July. By 1930, close to a hundred years from today, it would perform the first modern gender affirmation surgeries in the world. We live in a scientific era, an age of medical intervention and hormone therapy, reconstructive and sex-assignment surgery. And yet, we still struggle against hatred, prejudice, and legal systems that do not want to recognize the identity, autonomy, even existence of non-het(erosexual), non-cisgender people.

That such an institute existed as early as 1919, recognizing the plurality of gender identity and offering support, comes as a surprise to many. It should have been the bedrock on which to build a bolder future. But as the institute celebrated its first decade, the Nazi party was already on the rise. By 1932 it was the largest political party in Germany, growing its numbers through a nationalism that targeted the immigrant, the disabled and the "genetically unfit." Weakened by economic crisis and without a majority, the Weimar Republic collapsed.

Adolf Hitler was named chancellor on January 30, 1933, and enacted policies to rid Germany of *Lebensunwertes Leben*, or "lives unworthy of living." But it started long before; it started with laws and decrees meant to limit the autonomy; the rhetoric of the proto-Nazi period meant to divide people, and to make support and care impossible. The Nazis came for the sexology institute on May 6, 1933. A bonfire engulfed more than 20,000 books, some of them rare copies that had helped provide a historiography for gender nonconforming people. Being transgender or gay would be outlawed; you could be arrested; you could be killed. The Nazi ideal had been based on white, cishet (that is, cisgender and heterosexual) masculinity masquerading as genetic superiority. Any who strayed were considered immoral, and worthy of death. What began as a project of "protecting" German youth and raising healthy families had become, under Hitler, a mechanism for genocide.

100 years ago, you have a doctor who recognized that his patients' lives were improved by gender affirming care (and that it lowered suicide rates and led to good outcomes).

100 years ago, you have a group that wanted to prohibit affirming care, but also to single out trans and gay people as an "other," treating them as though they could not make choices about their body autonomy, as though they were sick and pathological, as though they were 'not like the others' (the phrase in German is *anders als die andern*).

I am sure you will receive plenty of statements talking about the benefit of care, and the danger of revoking care for transgender youth. But I want to remind you of that *other* danger: this is not the first time gay and trans people have been attacked in this way. It's not the first time conservative factions have villainized trans people, or suggested (as Margerie Taylor Greene did recently) that trans persons were pedophiles, or that they should be 'eliminated' as was the theme of CPAC.

Stopping this bill is first and foremost about protecting our children's right to affirming care. But it is also about stopping and reversing a frightening trend where only a few (white, cishet, often male) are protecting by law but not limited by it—while many more (minorities, LGBTQ+) are limited by the law, but not protected by it.

Don't let it happen here.

Thank you for your consideration. Please vote NO on HB 68