

Florida Rep. Fine wants to make treatments for transgender minors a felony

By [Steven Lemongello](#)

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In the wake of fierce criticism of the so-called [“don’t say gay” bill](#), GOP state Rep. Randy Fine says he will sponsor a bill aimed at preventing parents and doctors from providing gender assignment treatment to transgender children.

Fine, R-Palm Bay, said Monday the bill he plans to file next year would make providing drugs or surgery to a minor for gender assignment a felony child abuse crime punishable by prison and/or loss of a medical license. He said the bill would not affect “mental counseling” for minors.

The American Medical Association has called gender assignment care, which can include puberty-blocking drugs and hormone treatments, [“medically necessary”](#) and [“evidence-based”](#) and called on states to not ban the practice because of a significantly heightened risk of suicide from “societal stigma and discrimination.”

Idaho, Arkansas and Texas have banned such treatment for minors, and legislators in several other GOP-led states have called for similar bans.

In an interview with the Orlando Sentinel, Fine said his proposal was spurred by the backlash to what critics call the “don’t say gay” bill signed last week by Gov. Ron DeSantis.

The law prohibits discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity in schools up to the third grade and limits it to “age-appropriate” students in higher grades. Republicans argued the bill protects parental rights, while Democrats and LGBTQ groups contend it was intentionally vague and could have a chilling effect on teachers, students and the LGBTQ community.

Fine said opponents of his new law would be part of a “radical grooming minority that tried to sexualize our children,” echoing recent conservative rhetoric that opponents of the “don’t say gay” bill included pedophiles.

Asked if his proposed bill, first announced on Twitter, goes against the concept of parental rights espoused by DeSantis and Florida Republicans, Fine said, “parents don’t have a right to abuse their children. So if you agree with my premise ... that cutting off the penis of a 12-year-old is child abuse, then a parent shouldn’t have the right to do that.”

Transgender children are not offered puberty blockers or hormone treatments until they reach puberty, [according to the Washington Post](#), and the care is reversible. Gender surgeries for minors are rare and are usually not recommended [before the age of 18](#).

Asked about Dempsey Jara, a 10-year-old transgender girl who spoke at an Orlando roundtable Thursday with U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, and what she would be able to do under the proposed law, Fine said, “he can dress however he wants.”

“I don’t have any issue with people getting mental counseling or those kinds of things,” Fine said. “... When I was 10 years old, I might have wanted to be an astronaut. Was my entire life supposed to be upended because of that?”

He also claimed “a very large percentage of people” who transition “change their mind.”

Jaime Jara, Dempsey’s mother and a teacher at Liberty High School in Kissimmee, slammed Fine and his bill.

“Show me the stated research indicating large percentages of people who change their mind,” Jara said via email. “It does not exist from any reputable source. In fact, there is ample evidence showing that medical intervention is life and death for transgender children.”

Jara continued, “as Randy Fine is intentionally misgendering my daughter, I will respond accordingly. Ms. Fine, and other Republican politicians like her, claim that they are all about preserving parental rights. What about mine? Are parental rights only granted to Florida citizens based on party affiliation?”

She added, “Withholding medical treatment from transgender children is a road to inevitable death, which I am sure brings great delight to Ms. Fine, as she would rather my child just disappear or die off anyway. ... Ms. Fine, you are a politician, not a doctor. Mind your business and stop pandering to your base with attacks on children.”

Democratic state Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith, the Legislature’s first openly LGBTQ Hispanic member, also condemned Fine’s proposal.

“Florida Republicans are on a dangerous course, retaliating against any person or business who expresses support for the LGBTQ+ community,” Smith said. “This latest threat to criminalize parents and doctors who provide life-saving care for LGBTQ youth should shock the conscience of all Floridians.”



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