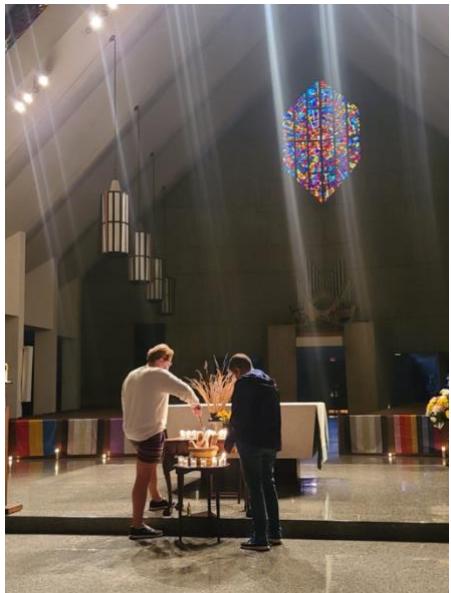


Bills, Bills, Bills: The Danger of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation in 2022

By Maggie Schaller



Over the last several months, we've seen an alarming trend nationally-no, not just inflation or an increase in Gen Zers wearing *shutter* fashion of the 90's. No, much more horrifically, there have been hundreds of bills moving through state legislatures across the country focused on rolling back LGBTQ+ rights.

A total of 335 bills have been introduced across the country and 17 bills have been signed into law in 10 different states, according to the Human Rights Campaign. Many-seven specifically-ban young trans people from playing sports, with three more expected to pass in the coming weeks.

The bills are varied-the Floridian "Don't Say Gay" bill has been signed into law, with copies introduced throughout the country, including my home state of Ohio. An insidious bill in Alabama just passed that categorizes gender-affirming care as a felony. And a bill moving through the South Carolina legislature would allow LGBTQ+ discrimination on the basis of religion.

There are several scary things about these potential or current laws, besides the obvious harm it will do to the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+, people, kids and their families. The truth is, these issues are largely targeting just that-kids-as a guise of protecting youth. But ultimately, they prevent young people and their families from making the right decisions for them-to play sports, to have access to proper medical care, etc., while declaring it a form of freedom. Bills like the "Don't Say Gay" bill are heralded as preventing indoctrination for kindergarteners through third grades on non-age-appropriate material, something I'm sure most folks would agree with. Setting aside the fact that this is generally a non-issue as districts individually, along with educators and parents, determine appropriate material and curriculum, it's not actually what the bill says.

The bill prevents discussing LGBTQ+ people and issues as well as heterosexual people and issues. But of course, the conversation of a straight person's husband or wife at home, or literature with "straight themes"-Cinderella or Goldilocks, for example, are so ubiquitous that they will not be at risk. Parents and individuals, as the bill is designed to do, are empowered to sue the district with any violation. This is designed so that parents can sue LGBTQ+ teachers and students alike, vulnerable just because of who they are.

It might be old hat to say that we as people of faith are called to stand with the marginalized. It's a refrain that we working in and passionate about the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative share as a value, regardless of what issue we work on and advocate

for. You are here, reading this, because of that shared value to follow the teachings of Jesus and Catholic Social Teachings.

But I will push here and say that work must not just happen in our neighborhoods, in our churches, in our MSJC teams, or in our hearts. That work also must happen in the realm of politics and legislation.

That idea can make many uncomfortable, and I understand that. But advocacy against hateful legislation-focused on discrimination, belittlement, or endangerment-means that we are doing the true work of standing with the marginalized. We can prevent such pain and suffering, as we are called, by voting, organizing, and making our voices heard. Hearts and minds must be coupled with action.

I urge you to get informed, get engaged, and get loud. This work-the work we are, old hat or not, called to do-is the work of a lifetime. No matter the latest trends.