

Trump administration withdraws federal protections for transgender students

By [Ariane de Vogue](#), Mary Kay Mallonee and [Emanuella Grinberg](#), CNN

Updated 10:16 AM ET, Thu February 23, 2017

The Trump administration on Wednesday night withdrew Obama-era protections for transgender students in public schools that let them use bathrooms and facilities corresponding with their gender identity.

The announcement is a significant victory for opponents of the Obama administration's guidelines who believe the federal government never should have gotten involved in the issue.

Civil rights groups, meanwhile, denounced the withdrawal as a politically motivated attack that will endanger transgender children and sow confusion over the federal government's role in enforcing civil rights.

Last May, the departments of Education and Justice [issued joint guidance](#) directing schools to let transgender students use facilities that correspond with their gender identity. The "[Dear Colleague](#)" letter, addressed to school districts and colleges that receive federal funding, was based on the Obama administration's interpretation of Title IX, the federal law that bans sex discrimination in schools, to include gender identity.

Reaction was swift and divisive, culminating in the Trump administration's first "[Dear Colleague](#)" letter rescinding the guidance without offering a replacement. Issued jointly by the departments of Education and Justice, the letter did not take a position on the underlying question of whether Title IX protects gender identity. The departments withdrew the guidance "in order to further and more completely consider the legal issues involved," the letter said.

The announcement follows the Department of Justice's [recent withdrawal from a court challenge](#) related to the guidance. Observers said it portended more anti-LGBTQ sentiment from the administration, despite promises from President Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to protect the LGBT community.

"This is a mean-spirited attack on hundreds of thousands of students who simply want to be their true selves and be treated with dignity while attending school," Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, said in a statement.