



**To: Interested Parties**  
**Fr: The Transgender Freedom Alliance**  
**Date: June 4, 2026**  
**Re: Responding to political attacks on transgender people**

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Anti-transgender attacks are now a core, well-funded component of Republican messaging. Candidates, elected officials, political consultants, and allies should assume these attacks will appear in nearly every competitive race.

In 2024, more than \$220 million was spent in Senate and presidential races on anti-trans advertising. At the state level, this has intensified. In Virginia's 2025 gubernatorial race, Winsome Earle-Sears devoted roughly half of her ad spending to anti-trans attacks, ultimately investing more than \$11 million on the issue.

These attacks are a consistent line of contrast designed to shape perceptions of Democratic candidates.

Campaigns that fail to respond lose ground. Campaigns that anticipate, test, and resource responses can neutralize the impact. In Virginia, [Governor Abigail Spanberger](#) pre-tested responses, went up within hours, and sustained paid response—helping blunt attacks and win decisively.

Simply put, if you don't respond, you are leaving a vulnerability unanswered when there are effective messages and strategies to inoculate and respond.

This memo provides evidence-backed message recommendations for use in debates and conversations with general audiences across age, race, and geography. Recommendations are based on extensive qualitative and quantitative research by the Transgender Freedom Alliance and its partners.

The memo includes guidance on the following topics:

- [Healthcare](#)
- [Funding for Transgender Healthcare](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Forced Outing](#)
- [Bathrooms](#)
- [Conversion Practices](#)

## OVERALL FRAMING

Voters don't want to spend time talking about or thinking through issues impacting transgender people. At the same time, they often have conflicted feelings or concerns around issues being raised by the Right's attacks and how they are framed. Voters continue to believe that Democrats are more focused on issues impacting transgender people. However, we have seen a shift from voters believing that Democrats are more extreme on the issue, to believing that Republicans are more extreme on the issue over the past several months. A recent [Fox News poll](#) showed that voters believe Democrats do a better job on transgender issues compared to Republicans by a 13 point margin.

At the end of the day, the most effective strategy, regardless of the attack, is to focus on shared values. Not responding is not an option—it harms real people and allows us to be painted as out of touch or extreme.

No matter the attack or vehicle, **our shared values** include:

- Protecting Individual Freedom
- Protecting Parental Freedom
- Opposing Government Overreach / Interference

## HEALTHCARE

The reality is that every state in the country already requires parental involvement in medical care decisions for transgender young people. This underscores a key point: the real question is not whether families are involved, but whether politicians should override the decisions of parents and doctors. **The is focus on who should get to make these decisions—parents, families and doctors—and focus specifically on making sure parents have the freedom to get their child the care they need.** [Seventy percent of voters](#) in battleground states agree that healthcare decisions for a transgender young person should be made by parents and doctors who know best—not politicians. And [60% of adults nationwide](#) believe families should have the ability to ensure their transgender child can receive medically necessary and age-appropriate care. Our best approach is not to litigate whether care should be available or who should be allowed to access it; rather, we should focus the conversation on who decides: families or politicians?

### Recommended Messages

- **Healthcare decisions for a young person who is transgender should be made by parents and doctors, who know the situation best—not by politicians.**
- *If pressed:* Banning doctors from providing healthcare to transgender young people has serious unintended consequences. Politicians are getting in the way of doctors who have years of training and experience, are practicing according to professional standards of care, and know what is best for their patients. This is their area of expertise, not politicians'.

- *If pressed on regret:* The expert standards for care of transgender adolescents require months of screening, doctor’s visits, and counseling sessions before any sort of medical care begins. Doctors and mental health professionals carefully monitor the course of care and make changes—if they’re needed—to ensure the patient is always receiving the right care. It would be impossible for a young person to decide they want to transition one day and make an irreversible decision the next.

### Additional Guidance

1. **DO keep any response focused on who decides (parents, families, and doctors, not politicians) when possible.**
2. **DO** focus on the roles of **parents, families, and doctors**, and how politicians shouldn’t be banning parents from getting their child the care they need.
3. **DO** reassure listeners that every single state in the country requires parental involvement in order for a transgender young person to access healthcare.
4. **DON’T** use terms (e.g., “gender-affirming care”) that are unfamiliar to voters or imply that this care is different from other medical care. Instead, use everyday, relatable language like **healthcare** or **medical care**—for example, **essential healthcare, medically necessary care**.
5. **DON’T** get baited into engaging on specific examples. Return to the point that parents or families—not politicians—should be the decision-makers on these issues.

## **FUNDING FOR TRANSGENDER HEALTHCARE**

The Right is advancing efforts to ban transgender healthcare outright, bar any institution receiving federal funding from providing it, and prohibit the use of federal funds to provide it. These efforts often leverage healthcare funding—framed as 'taxpayer dollars'—as a political wedge, exploiting emotionally charged issues and linking them to economic concerns. This approach also adds confusion to an area where public understanding is limited.

While a majority of Americans support comprehensive healthcare access for transgender adults; at the same time, they have complex feelings about healthcare for transgender young people. When addressing attacks on funding for healthcare for transgender people, help people sort through the complicated feelings and lack of familiarity they may have and know that engaging and persuading is effective when using the right messages.

When talking about proposed bans on healthcare for transgender young people in federally funded insurance programs, a three-pronged message was most effective to persuade voters to oppose it.

### Recommended Messages

- Regardless of how we feel personally about the issue, parents of transgender young people should have the right to make personal healthcare decisions with their families and their doctors just like every other parent—without government interference or fear of losing insurance coverage.
- Our country is facing major challenges. The economy is struggling, and costs are out of control. Politicians should be focused on getting things in this country back on track, not messing with Medicare and Medicaid.
- America was founded on the basic principle of freedom, and that freedom should be for everyone. Transgender people deserve the same basic protections as everyone else—to live their lives with safety, privacy, and dignity, and that includes having access to the healthcare they need.

### Additional Guidance

The Trump Administration’s attempt to ban private insurers from covering transgender healthcare—and to cut federal funding from medical institutions that provide it, including for unrelated research and programs—raises serious voter concerns about government overreach and the impact of these cuts on all Americans.

1. The government should not get to decide what kind of care medical professionals need to provide to patients. These decisions are best left to families and doctors, who should be able to provide safe, effective, and medically necessary care without fear of being shut down by the federal government.
2. Healthcare providers rely on federal funding to provide care to many patients—not just transgender young people. If healthcare providers' federal funding is stripped away by the Trump Administration, they would be forced to reduce services, cut staff, and increase costs, which would hurt all patients.
3. Stripping federal funding from healthcare providers is a massive government overreach. Politicians are trying to use their funding power to coerce doctors and control what they provide to patients even when that care is paid for with private funds.

## **SPORTS**

Republicans and anti-transgender advocates have elevated youth sports as a political flashpoint—using it as a wedge issue to justify broader restrictions on transgender people and stoke animus toward them. By focusing on sports, they tap into voters’ instincts around fairness and safety and pit the interests of transgender people against the interests of everyone else in America.

Voters do believe there should be rules governing sports participation—but they have real qualms when it comes to the details of blanket bans that apply across every age, sport, and level of play.

While concerns about fairness and safety are real, a majority of voters (55%) say decisions about transgender athletes' participation should be made by schools and sports associations—not politicians. Voters' views become more nuanced when they consider how blanket bans would work in practice. They are wary of one-size-fits-all laws that fail to account for differences across:

- **Sport** (e.g., fencing vs. soccer)
- **Age** (young children at recess vs. high school seniors)
- **Level of play** (recreational vs. varsity)ent—including invasive questioning or even physical exams—when pushing back against these blanket bans.

### Recommended Messages

- We all want **sports to be fair and student athletes to be safe**. That's why sports associations already **make rules about who can participate** in different sports at different levels and ages.
- Those rules don't need to be the same for **every age, level of play, and sport**. A 6-year-old playing with friends at recess is different from a college athlete playing a contact sport. And the rifle team is different from the football team.
- A blanket ban overriding those rules would be bad for everyone, requiring young girls to answer invasive personal questions or even undergo physical inspections by strangers if they want to play sports.
- These bans would invite anyone to call for a "gender check" on any girl who wants to play sports if they think she is "too tall" or "too strong."
- Participating in sports teaches important values like perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork. We should want more young people to play sports, not put up more barriers for girls across the country that subject them to invasive interrogation or make them risk public ridicule to join a sports team.

### Additional Guidance

1. **DO emphasize that school districts and athletic leagues should make these decisions (and already do), not politicians.**
2. **DO raise concern about blanket bans** that are the same for every age, level of play, and sport.
3. **DON'T engage in a prolonged back-and-forth.** These messages are short for a reason. After you make the core points clearly, pivot to an emphasis on concerns and priorities held by most voters—e.g., lowering costs for working families.
4. **DON'T get baited into engaging on specific examples.** The point is that politicians are not the qualified decision-makers on these issues.

## FORCED OUTING

In terms of policies that require schools and teachers to report kids to their parents for being gay or transgender (known as “forced outing”), the frame of freedom or government overreach is less effective. In these instances, **the values frame is that of parenting and our shared desire to keep kids safe**. It is also effective to show empathy for the emotional burden this places on teachers, particularly in light of the Trump Administration's executive order allowing for the prosecution of teachers who support transgender students. In fact, when asked about a proposal that would prosecute teachers who support transgender students, [a strong majority of adults \(61%\) are opposed](#), while only 27% are supportive.

It is critical to emphasize that not all kids are safe at home, and we should not force teachers to knowingly put those kids in danger. Frame messaging in the values of parenting and protecting young people, providing voters with the reassurance that we know *they* are good parents, but acknowledging that not all homes are safe.

### Recommended Message

- Most parents know their kids would come to them if they needed help.
- And we all want kids to be safe. Most families put the well-being of their child first, but in rare cases, a young person may be in danger at home. In those situations, we want teachers to be able to provide kids with another safe and trusted adult with whom they can talk.
- Teachers in every school district in this country work hand-in-hand with parents to make sure students get what they need to thrive. It's a partnership they rely on, as they know they can't do it alone. Students do best when parents and teachers are working together to make them feel supported, challenged, and safe.
- If a young person is struggling or unsafe, we would never want to put them at greater risk. We should not force teachers to knowingly put those kids in danger and violate the trust they build with their students.

### Additional Guidance

1. **DO invoke the shared value of keeping kids safe and show empathy for the emotional burden this places on teachers.**
2. **DO** Emphasize that parents are informed the overwhelming majority of the time, and that teachers want to bring parents into these conversations.
3. After addressing concerns, **DO** pivot to the shared goal of ensuring all kids have the mental health support they need..
4. **DON'T** use *freedom* framing in this context. An emphasis on *keeping kids safe* is

better-aligned with shared values and effective persuasion on this topic.

5. **DON'T** get baited into engaging on specific examples.

## BATHROOMS

When it comes to bathroom bans, it's effective to call out the motivation of the opposition and remind listeners that there are other, more pressing issues that elected officials should be focusing on, such as the economy and rising costs.

**If necessary, you can raise issues with enforcement**, including that these bans could result in harassment of non-transgender women, [which has already happened](#).

### Recommended Messages

- Politicians are trying to make an issue out of transgender people using a bathroom to score political points and scare people.
- While they're focused on who is using what bathroom, we should be focused on lowering costs and getting our economy back on track.
- IF PRESSED:  
These bans will just create more [confusion](#) and are impossible to enforce without engaging in gender checks. Already, we have seen [evidence](#) of women being asked about their gender while using the bathroom.

### Additional Guidance

1. **DO name the motivation of opponents, and then pivot quickly.**
2. If pushed, **DO** highlight the confusing and difficult nature of enforcing these bans and question enforcement realities.
3. **DON'T** engage in a prolonged back-and-forth or get baited into engaging in specific examples
4. **THINK CAREFULLY** before talking about the fact that existing laws make harassment illegal. While this can soothe some people's concerns, it can also open the door to complicated questions. This may evoke complex reactions that can be difficult to navigate in this particular setting.

## DANGEROUS AND DISCREDITED CONVERSION PRACTICES

There is an uptick in dangerous, discredited practices that fringe therapists are trying to force on gay and transgender young people - what is often referred to as "conversion therapy." The reality is, no amount of talk or pressure can make a gay person not gay, or a transgender person not transgender—and licensed therapists shouldn't be able to abuse their position of trust to push an

agenda that [research has shown](#) puts kids at high risk of suicide attempts. Messages addressing conversion practices should focus on the fact that these practices have been discredited and are dangerous as well as on the harms that these practices can cause.

### Recommended Message

- We all want kids to be healthy and safe. That’s why it’s important to protect gay and transgender young people from abusive conversion practices that isolate and psychologically abuse kids, scapegoat parents, and divide families.
- Conversion “therapy” is not actually therapy. It has no scientific basis. People are just making stuff up, calling it “therapy,” and pushing it on kids. Decades of social science research and court decisions have shown conversion ‘therapy’ to be fraudulent and dangerous.
- These dangerous conversion practices violate the basic principles of therapy. Instead of a nonjudgmental approach, conversion therapists use talk therapy practices to push an agenda on their patients, pressuring gay and transgender youth into hating themselves and rejecting who they are.
- Being gay or transgender is a fundamental part of who someone is. No amount of talk, pressure, or shaming tactics can make a gay person not gay, or a transgender person not transgender.

### Additional Guidance

- There is overwhelming medical consensus that conversion therapy puts young people at risk. The American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Association of Social Workers have debunked these practices and warned that they put the health and well-being of young gay and transgender young people in danger.
- Licensed mental health professionals who push this agenda and subject kids to these practices are acting outside the science and ethics of the mental health profession, and they’re causing lasting harm to children.

### If Pressed on Efforts to Relabel Conversion Practices As “Exploratory Therapy”

- Therapy for young people only works if the therapist is not pushing an agenda on the child. So-called “exploratory therapy” is exactly the opposite. It’s the same dangerous conversion agenda—just with a friendlier-sounding name. [Then pivot to *Recommended Messages* above]

Research and case studies highlight the following considerations about messaging and tone:

- **Do not dismiss concerns outright.** Voters bristle at being told they are wrong or having their concerns dismissed.
- **Staying grounded and thoughtful can work.** When we acknowledge their concerns, voters respond well to attempts to bring the temperature down a notch.
- **Toughness is more helpful than compassion.** Voters worry Democrats are too compassionate and not tough enough on a range of issues, especially when it comes to safety. If someone accuses you of being soft on safety, indignation and toughness can go a long way in changing these perceptions.
- **Be authentic.** Voters expect Democrats to run from this issue, stumble over their words, and use canned talking points. It's imperative you reflect the values cited in this playbook, but you can and should aim to make the words and stories your own. Confidence is key.

Below are top testing messages, why they work, and examples of ways candidates, elected officials, and others can make them their own are below.

**Grounded and Pragmatic**

Hints at bipartisanship

Unlike the loudest voices on the left and the right, I won't pretend to have all the answers. This issue is more complicated than campaign slogans. The responsible thing to do is work together, focus on practical solutions, and make sure everyone has the same basic rights under the law.

Nod to very popular equality/anti-discrim.

Acknowledges the issue is complicated (73% of voters agree, and especially resonates with Hispanic men)

Talks about all of us, which includes transgender people

**Make it Your Own...**

When my girls are frustrated, I try to remind them that life doesn't come with easy answers. So, unlike the loudest voices on the left and the right, I won't pretend I've got it all figured out. But I do know one thing: The parents and doctors of a young person who is transgender know the situation best. They need to take time and figure out what makes sense without politicians breathing down their necks.

**Values Heavy Orientation**  
Especially Strong with White Women

Talks about all of us, which includes transgender people

My values guide all of my decisions as a lawmaker. Most important among them: making sure every American is treated with dignity and respect. That includes transgender people. My position is simple: every American, no matter their race, gender, sexuality, or so on, should be treated equally.

Voters want the same rights and respect for all of us – no more, no less

**Make it Your Own...**

My faith isn't something I set aside when I walk into public life. It's what guides me. I was taught that every person is created by God and worthy of dignity and respect. That includes transgender people. Every American, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or who they are, should be treated equally and fairly.

Suggests you're not an activist and you treat everyone the same

Patriotic sounding

**Tough, Freedom-Focused**  
Especially Strong with Black & Hispanic Men

It doesn't matter how I personally feel about a trans person. It's their right as an American to live how they want, and I'll be damned if I let somebody tell any American who they are or what they can do with their life.

Pushes off of belief  
Democrats are soft

Makes this about all of us

**Make it Your Own...**

I spent years wearing the uniform and serving people from every background you can imagine because freedom isn't conditional. It doesn't matter if I personally understand your life. It doesn't matter if I agree with every choice you make. It's your right as an American to live how you want, and I'll be damned if I let somebody tell any American who they are or what they can do with their life.

## ABOUT THE TRANSGENDER FREEDOM ALLIANCE

The Transgender Freedom Alliance (TFA) is a coalition of transgender leaders—including political strategists, litigators, and public health experts—alongside messaging specialists and research firms, allowing us to build upon past research and strategic interventions. Our work is led by Adrienne Kimmell and is funded primarily by individual donors committed to advancing transgender rights and defending democracy against authoritarianism.

Our core mission is to expand public support for the transgender community by emphasizing values such as:

- Freedom from government interference in personal medical decisions.
- Parental freedom in making healthcare decisions for their children.
- Respect and dignity for every individual.

We expose anti-transgender attacks as a political distraction tactic—designed to create fear rather than address real issues—and redirect public discourse toward pressing policy concerns.

## Contact

Please contact Adrienne Kimmell ([AKimmell@sparksolutions.us](mailto:AKimmell@sparksolutions.us)) for more information or to schedule a briefing.