



**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Global Strategy Group, HIT Strategies, and Equis Research

**Date:** April 2026

**Re:** Messaging Guidance for Candidates Facing Anti-Trans Attacks

Global Strategy Group, HIT Strategies, and Equis Research partnered together with Transgender Freedom Alliance to conduct extensive qualitative and quantitative research with battleground swing voters from around the country focused on answering the question: How can Democratic candidates best navigate Republicans' anti-trans attacks coming their way in 2026?

This research sought to build on Democratic success in responding to anti-trans attacks in 2025 and provide candidates, elected officials, and other leaders guidelines on how to soothe concerns amid oncoming anti-transgender attacks from the Right without harming transgender people. It is not intended to create long-term narrative change, go on offense, or provide specific talking points. Below are key recommendations.

## Messaging Playbook

### Tone

- **Do not dismiss concerns outright.** Voters bristle at being told they are wrong or having their concerns dismissed. This is especially damaging for Democrats who are already seen as condescending and elitist.
- **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.

### Timing

- **Don't let the attacks be the first thing to define you.** Simply showing voters who you are and emphasizing traits/experiences that seem at odds with the attacks makes them less sticky. In some (though not all) situations, it can reduce the need for responding in paid entirely.
- **Be prepared.** Democrats like Abigail Spanberger were able to navigate and overcome millions of dollars in anti-trans attacks because they prepared responses early and were ready to go as soon as the opposition signaled they'd be spending heavily on the issue.
- **Engage without dwelling on the issue.** By a 2-to-1 margin, voters believe Democrats are more focused on this issue than Republicans. It is imperative that you show you take these concerns seriously without feeding into the perception that this is a major focus of your campaign.

### What to Convey

This can be through words, visuals, validators, and proof points.

| What                                   | Why  | How   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Safety will always be paramount</b> | Kids' safety is always a top concern for voters, but especially on this issue. The perceived chaos feels unnerving for voters. | Lean into traits like law enforcement experience or legislative action involving safety (this can be their physical safety and beyond, like giving parents a greater say over what kids do online or with AI) |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>You care deeply about <u>fairness</u></b>       | Fairness (having a real opportunity to win) is the most common concern surrounding sports, especially among Dem-leaning audiences.                             | Leaning into relevant traits like working in schools, experience as a coach, or having your own kids playing <i>competitive</i> sports suggests you understand kids need rules and equal treatment. |
| <b>Everyone should have the <u>same rights</u></b> | In theory, voters broadly support the idea of equal rights and anti-discrimination. Their concern is about handing out “special rights” to transgender people. | Emphasize that all you seek to do is ensure everyone has access to the <i>same</i> rights – no matter their race, gender, or otherwise.   |
| <b>You look out for <u>everyone</u></b>            | Voters say Democrats are overly inclusive and too focused on one group at the expense of the whole.  | Emphasizing everyone by using phrases like “all of our kids” or “what’s best for all Americans”   |
| <b>You’re <u>reasonable</u></b>                    | Voters are sick of extreme rhetoric and each side acting like it has all the answers.  | Push off of left and right, explicitly saying you don’t like the extremes on either side. Instead say you’re focused on voters’ concerns and dedicated to working through it.                       |

### Transition-Related Care Specific Recommendations

- Frame the other side as wanting government bans on health care
- Emphasize how these decisions should be made by parents and doctors, not politicians
- Remind voters that it’s a personal issue, and we shouldn’t have one-size-fits-all bans

### Audiences to Consider

- The Right frequently targets **Black and Hispanic men, along with white women**. They are in turn disproportionately swingable on this issue.
- While the recommendations in this memo apply across all groups, there are a few ways to update your message by audience.

| Targeted Messaging Recommendations for Key Audiences |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Black Men</b>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Put an extra emphasis on the need to <b>incorporate “experts” into the lawmaking process</b> for trans policy – especially on health care</li> <li>■ Talk about what we are owed as Americans: <b>basic rights</b> and the freedom to do what we want with our life</li> <li>■ Reach younger Black men on social and cable news, older Black men on local TV</li> </ul> |
| <b>Hispanic Men</b>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Highlight how <b>complicated</b> these issues are and how there is no <b>one-size-fits-all</b> solution</li> <li>■ Especially lean into one’s status as a <b>parent</b></li> <li>■ Get in front of them on <b>social platforms</b>, particularly with younger Hispanic men</li> </ul>   |
| <b>White Women</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lean into values like <b>dignity and respect</b>, and the desire for equal treatment</li> <li>■ Reach younger white women on social and older on traditional outlets</li> </ul>   |

### Top Messages and Examples of How a Candidate Makes it Their Own

Multiple rounds of qualitative research yielded 10 messages that we then tested in the most recent survey. The top testing messages, why they work, and examples of ways candidates 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.

**Tough, Freedom-Focused**

Especially Strong with Black & Hispanic Men

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

Patriotic sounding

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.