



ARVADA
United Methodist Church

AUMC'S JUSTICE IN ACTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS A "NO" VOTE ON PROP 135

Approved by committee vote on August 31, 2026

PROPOSITION 135 – Prohibiting Surgery Intended to Alter Biological Sex Characteristics on Minors

WHAT THIS INITIATIVE WOULD DO

This measure would modify Colorado statutes to:

- prohibit healthcare professionals from performing or providing surgeries to persons under age 18 for the purpose of altering biological sex characteristics, defined as "treatment in response to a minor's perception of sex or gender"; and
- prohibit the use of state or federal funds, Medicaid reimbursements, or insurance coverage to pay for such procedures.

[Text of initiative](#) (formerly Initiative #110)

ARGUMENTS FOR THE INITIATIVE

Supporters of the argument argue that children under the age of 18 are too young to make such major and irreversible life decisions that impact their reproductive futures. We already set age limits on many other actions with arguably fewer consequences, such as voting, drinking, and signing contracts. Other countries who have looked at this issue have decided to prohibit these surgeries, as have a majority of states in the U.S.

Supporters: [Protect Kids Colorado](#)

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE INITIATIVE

Opponents argue that this initiative is designed to further stigmatize transgender people for no good reason. Studies show that gender-affirming surgical care for transgender children and youth is incredibly rare. This is because doctors are following already-existing guidelines for this care, which limit its use except in specifically defined circumstances after extensive evaluation. This initiative would limit even this access to gender-affirming healthcare for transgender youth. It pushes the government into personal health care decisions that should stay with families and medical providers. That kind of political intrusion does not make families safer or stronger.

In addition, because the measure is vaguely worded, there are unintended consequences that risk endangering all kids in our communities. For example, this measure could block surgeries for teens who need life-saving treatment for certain cancers, or prevent surgeries on intersex youth, who have biological sex characteristics of both genders.

Opponents: [Families Not Politics](#), [One Colorado](#)

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

2026 Colorado Election Blue Book – Proposition 135 (mailed to voters)

[Ballotpedia](#)

JUSTICE IN ACTION COMMITTEE POSITION ON THIS INITIATIVE

As a committee and pursuant to a consensus vote, **we oppose this initiative and urge United Methodists to vote against it.**

OUR REASONS FOR THIS POSITION

Our Social Principles call on us to respect the rights and dignity of every person, including the rights of children and youth, and to work towards a society in which every person is safe and thriving. We define health care as a basic human right. We are also called to oppose policies that discriminate against children and youth based on their gender identity. In considering our position, we looked at whether this ballot issue, which claims to be protecting children and youth against immature decisions, is necessary for their safety and well-being, or whether it discriminates against them without appropriate reasons.

Numerous studies have found that gender-affirming medical care is associated with improved mental health outcomes for transgender and nonbinary youth who desire it. This care is also supported by every relevant major medical organization including The American Academy of Pediatrics, The Endocrine Society, The World Professional Association for Transgender Health, and The Society for Adolescent Health & Medicine.

Proponents imply that children and youth will be harmed by making immature and physically irreversible decisions about their bodies. Research shows that the prevalence of youth undergoing gender affirming surgery is very low, probably because the medical profession already has guidelines for the treatment of transgender children and youth. For example, the American Academy of Pediatricians supports a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, gender-affirming care model for youth as set forth in their policy Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents. While their guidelines acknowledge that surgical options exist within the broad spectrum of gender-affirming care, major surgical interventions are exceedingly rare for minors and are generally deferred until adulthood, with clinical focus for adolescents centered primarily on supportive, reversible, or endocrine interventions. The AAP recently reaffirmed its policy and stated its opposition to policy restrictions on care.

We acknowledge that some gender-affirming surgeries could be irreversible, and we agree these should not be entered into lightly for a minor. We also acknowledge that some other countries have banned gender-affirming surgeries for youth, most notably Great Britain. However, we also recognize that several European countries have recently reaffirmed the approach currently contained in the AAP guidelines, namely, that surgeries for minors are not the expected treatment but may be available in exceptional circumstances.

Finally, we found that the pooled regret rate for gender-affirming surgery among all populations is roughly **1%** (ranging from less than 1% to about 2% across major scientific reviews). This rate of patient regret is lower than what is typically reported for many common elective or joint replacement surgeries, which often range from 10% to 20%. It does not appear that there is justification here for stepping into what should be a medical decision. For all

these reasons, we agree with the AAP recommendation to leave such decisions to the involved parties, without trying to address these cases through laws and policies that offer a blanket restriction.

In 2025, Colorado legislators considered this issue and passed the “Protect Access to Gender-Affirming Health Care Act,” which states that health insurance plans may not deny coverage for gender-affirming care that is (a) medically necessary, as determined by a physician or behavioral health care provider (b) prescribed in accordance with generally accepted standards of care in the profession. Existing law is already consistent with research and medical guidelines.

We also agree that this ballot issue appears to be an effort to unnecessarily stigmatize and even harm transgender youth, in violation of our Social Principles and our belief in the worth and dignity of every person. For example, Ballotpedia points out:

The terms used to describe the procedures referenced in this initiative differ between supporters and opponents:

- The ballot initiative describes these procedures as *altering a child’s biological sex*; the campaign, Protect Kids Colorado, called them *irreversible sex change surgeries*; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. issued a declaration describing them as *pediatric sex-rejecting procedures*.
- Colorado defined these procedures in state law as *gender-affirming healthcare* designed to address *gender dysphoria*; the American Academy of Pediatrics described them as *gender-affirmative surgical interventions*; and the ACLU called them *gender-affirming medical care*.

We believe existing law and medical guidelines already appropriately address this issue in conformance with our faith.

WHAT WE CONSIDERED IN TAKING THIS POSITION

UMC sources considered:

- Relevant provisions of the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church (attached)
- Trimble, J. “[Protecting Transgender Civil and Human Rights](#).” General Board of Church and Society, 3/23/26
- Committee discussions

External sources considered:

- [History](#) and [text](#) of the measures available from the Colorado Secretary of State
- [Ballotpedia resources and analysis](#)
- HB 25-1309, [Protect Access to Gender-Affirming Health Care Act](#)
- Reports and analyses:
 - Rafferty, et al (2018). [Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents](#). Pediatrics 142(4).
 - Brownstein, M. (2024). [“Gender-Affirming Surgeries Rarely Performed on Transgender Youth.”](#) Harvard University, T.H. Chan School of Public Health.
 - Kidd, K. and Sequiera, G. (2024). [“Misinformation Related to Discontinuation and Regret among Adolescents Receiving Gender-Affirming Care.”](#) J. Adolescent Health, 75(5), 698-99.

- Bustos, V., et al. (2021). [Regret after Gender-Affirmation Surgery: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Prevalence.](#) *Plast Reconstr Glob Surg Open*, 9(3):e3477.
- Media reports:
 - [Tanner, L. “How Common is Transgender Treatment Regret, Detransitioning?” Associated Press, 3/5/23](#)
 - [Reed, E. ”New German, Swiss, and Austrian Guidelines Recommend Gender-Affirming Care, Slam Cass Report.” Advocate, 3/12/25.](#)
 - [Klapsa, K. “The Real Story on Europe’s Transgender Debate.” Politico, 10/8/23.](#)

UMC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES 2025-28 – EXCERPTS RELEVANT TO PROPOSITION 135

Para. 163 IV. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

...

BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

We declare that all individuals, no matter their circumstances or social standing, are entitled to basic human rights and freedoms. These rights are grounded in God’s gracious act in creation (Genesis 1:27), and they are revealed fully in Jesus’ incarnation of divine love. As a church, we will work to protect these rights and freedoms within the church and to reform the structures of society to ensure that every human being can thrive.

...

We condemn all attempts to deny individuals their basic rights or freedoms or to strip human beings of their inherent dignity and worth. We, therefore, reject within the church and wider society any act of discrimination, hatred or violence directed against individuals or groups based on national origin, tribal affiliation, ethnicity, age, gender identity, disability status, economic condition, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or any other factors...

...

A. *Health Care* – We affirm health care as a basic human right and vow to work toward expanded access to all forms of medical treatment, including preventative, therapeutic, and palliative care. ... We call on governments, businesses, churches, and civil society institutions to work cooperatively to ensure that every human being has access to medical services and treatment.

...

B. *Children and Young People* – We call on church and society to support and advocate for the well-being of all children and young people and for their safety, nurture, agency, ... and we challenge policies that deny basic rights to the young or discriminate against them based on gender identity,

...

I. *Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities* – Because all people are of sacred worth and certain basic human rights are due to everyone, we are committed to supporting the equal rights, liberties, and protections of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity ... Moreover, because in many countries sexual and gender minorities are disproportionately impacted by social stigmas, discrimination, coercion and violence, we call on

churches, governments, businesses, and civic organizations to do all in their power to combat such unjust treatment and to promote equal rights and protections for all.