

Sondra Wilson **for Iowa Governor**

“Heal the Heartland – Heal the World!”

Policy on Transgender Issues, Child Protection, and Public Institutions

December 17, 2025 (Last update: 7:00 pm, December 18)

This document explains, in clear and direct terms, where I stand on transgender-related public policy in Iowa — including child protection, medical ethics, civil rights enforcement, education, and the proper role of public institutions.

These issues involve real people, real families, and real consequences. They have also been distorted by years of political escalation, institutional failure, and cultural breakdown. This statement exists to replace slogans with standards, panic with precision, and polarization with leadership.

Executive Summary

This policy framework is grounded in governance, not ideology. It is designed to restore public trust, protect children, uphold adult civil rights, and ensure that Iowa’s laws are enforceable, durable, and humane.

For more than a decade, transgender-related policy has been driven by nationalized culture-war escalation rather than Iowa-based deliberation. Institutions moved faster than evidence, slogans replaced standards, and accountability collapsed. The predictable result was backlash that harmed the very people civil-rights law was meant to protect—especially transgender adults who live, work, and raise families in Iowa.

This framework rejects both panic and denial. It replaces polarization with clear standards.

Core Governing Principles

- When evidence is incomplete and consequences are irreversible, restraint is protection—not neglect.
- Children deserve time.
- Adults deserve autonomy.

- Civil rights must be precise, enforceable, and tied to tangible harm to survive backlash.
 - Institutions—not children or minority groups—must be regulated when policy fails.
-

Children & Medical Intervention

- I oppose puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgery for minors under 16 in all circumstances.
- Claims that these interventions are “fully reversible” are false and misleading.
- Children cannot consent to permanent loss of future options.
- Waiting preserves autonomy; acceleration narrows it.
- Rare medical exceptions, if any, must involve long-term clinical oversight, parental involvement, and zero institutional pressure.

Intersex conditions and medically diagnosable disorders of sexual development require separate consideration.

These cases are distinct from gender identity and are governed by established medical ethics focused on long-term physical outcomes. My position reflects lived experience and clinical reality: irreversible intervention too early can cause lasting harm, while delaying necessary care past puberty can lock in avoidable physical damage. A carefully governed treatment window in mid-adolescence — with rigorous medical oversight — is designed to produce better lifelong outcomes, not to deny care or coverage.

Medically necessary care in these cases is fully covered under my healthcare plan as **Tier One care**, meaning it is treated as essential, non-discretionary healthcare with no coverage carve-outs or political exclusions. Full details are available in my healthcare plan designed specifically for Iowa:

<https://wildwillpower.org/statewide-platform/sondracare-plan/>

This is a child-protection standard, not a denial of adult care.

Adult Medical Care

- Transgender adults have the right to access medically necessary gender-affirming care.
- Denying adult care while restricting public participation is cruelty, not policy.
- Responsible adult care reduces conflict in shared spaces and strengthens social stability.

- Medical decisions for adults must be patient-led, evidence-based, and free from political interference.
-

Parents, Families, and Religion

- Parents must be informed and involved in decisions affecting their children.
 - Secrecy is not safety.
 - Religious belief is not a license for abuse.
 - Conversion therapy—religious or outsourced—is abuse and must remain prohibited.
 - LGBTQ children deserve protection from coercion, shame, and psychological harm.
-

Schools & Education

- Schools must protect students from bullying and harassment.
 - Support does not require saturation, identity immersion, or ideological instruction.
 - Schools must not initiate identity exploration or medical pathways.
 - Institutions respond to clear indicators and/or sustained distress; they do not steer development. Strong response as opposed to excessive initiation.
 - Explicit sexual material does not belong in grade-school libraries.
 - Age-appropriate separation is stewardship, not censorship.
-

Women's Sports

- Women's sports exist to ensure fair competition based on biological differences that materially affect performance.
- One year of hormone therapy does not neutralize the advantages of male puberty.
- Sex-classified categories must be protected without defaming transgender women.
- I support exploring optional **Open Leagues**, based on sport-specific performance factors, as a long-term solution—not a replacement for women's sports.

This is about fairness and dignity for all athletes, not demonization.

Speech, Respect, and the Law

- Repeated or sustained misrepresentation or misidentification of a person whose gender expression is consistent over time may constitute harassment when it produces demonstrable harm.
- I oppose compelled speech, including mandatory pronoun enforcement by law.
- Respect must be taught and modeled—not coerced.
- Law governs conduct and harm, not belief.

Note: Tangible Harm and Speech-as-Conduct

Civil-rights enforcement under this framework governs conduct that foreseeably causes legally cognizable harm — not belief, disagreement, or identity.

Political disagreement, belief, and isolated speech — including religious or ideological expression — remain protected.

However, repeated or sustained conduct that misrepresents, devalues, or targets a person or class of persons in shared public or institutional settings, where such conduct has a well-documented tendency to undermine equal access or dignity, gives rise to a presumption of harm under civil-rights law.

In such cases, the law does not require members of a vulnerable class to individually prove injury that is inherent in the conduct itself. The threshold is not subjective offense, but foreseeability, repetition, and the nature of the conduct within its social and historical context.

This presumption is limited to narrow categories of conduct already recognized in law — such as defamation per se, hostile-environment harassment, and deprivation of civil rights — and does not extend to mere disagreement or belief.

Where modern doctrine has drifted toward requiring vulnerable citizens to prove individualized harm from conduct historically understood as inherently injurious, this framework supports reevaluating those standards in light of the Constitution’s purpose to secure liberty, equal protection, and the general welfare.

Gender Identity, Expression, and Legal Protection

- Gender identity alone is not sufficient for enforceable legal protection.
- Law governs shared public interaction, not private internal states.
- Legal protection requires consistent, intelligible gender expression over time.

- This is not about “passing,” stereotyping, or conformity. Law requires intelligibility for enforcement — not aesthetic conformity or identity policing.
- Pure self-declaration without social coherence cannot be enforced by law without collapsing legitimacy.
- Gender-fluid people deserve dignity and voluntary accommodation—not legal compulsion or punishment for honest mistakes.

For purposes of legal enforcement, “consistent and intelligible expression over time” refers to sustained, socially legible role integration sufficient for third parties to apply the law without subjective guesswork or reliance on self-attestation alone.

Why the Law Regulates Conduct — Not Inner Beliefs

Much of the current culture war rests on a contradiction that rarely gets stated out loud.

Some argue that a person’s internal sense of identity — what they believe about themselves — should not be enforced on others.

That argument is often used to reject purely self-declared legal obligations.

But the same people frequently argue that *their own* internal religious beliefs should override another person’s dignity, access, or participation in public life.

Both positions cannot be true at the same time.

The law does not — and cannot — enforce internal mental states. It does not enforce identity. It does not enforce belief. That is true whether the belief is about gender, religion, or anything else.

What the law regulates is **conduct**: how people act toward one another in shared public and institutional settings.

That is why declaring an identity, by itself, does not create enforceable legal obligations. Law requires outward, consistent, and intelligible expression so that rules can be applied without guesswork, coercion, or reliance on private self-attestation alone.

And it is also why declaring a religion does not grant license to harass, target, or demean others through conduct.

A person is free to hold religious beliefs about gender. They are free to disagree. They are free to critique.

They are **not** free to use those beliefs as a pretext for repeated targeting, humiliation, exclusion, or harassment of others in shared spaces.

Misgendering, when used as a pattern of conduct to single out or degrade someone, is not a protected belief. It is behavior. And behavior is what the law evaluates.

This standard applies evenly.
Identity alone does not compel others.
Belief alone does not excuse conduct.

If someone believes they are acting morally, they are free to live by that belief. What they are not entitled to do is make it their moral project to fixate on a small number of people in public life through repeated, degrading behavior — especially when they could just as easily choose to disengage.

Disagreement is protected. Critique is protected. Moral opposition is protected.
Targeting people through conduct is not.

This is not a political standard. It is a functional one. It preserves dignity without enforcing belief, and it preserves freedom without granting permission to harass. It draws a line that applies to everyone — which is exactly what the law is supposed to do.

Bathrooms, Locker Rooms, and Shared Spaces

- Privacy, safety, and dignity must be protected for everyone—especially minors and trauma survivors.
- Where foreseeable harm exists, reasonable accommodations are appropriate.
- Separate changing spaces for minors are about maturity and consideration, not exclusion.

Environmental Health & Public Risk

- Iowa families face widespread exposure to hormone-disrupting chemicals.
- These substances are known to affect sexual development.
- Scientific uncertainty strengthens the case for restraint—not acceleration.
- Transgender people are not the cause of public anxiety; they may be the canary in the coal mine.
- Scapegoating minorities does not protect children—environmental stewardship does.

Environmental health analysis in this framework does not explain or pathologize transgender identity, nor does civil-rights protection depend on origin, causation, or theory. The relevance of environmental risk lies in public-health stewardship and child safety, not in attributing identity to external factors. Scientific uncertainty strengthens the case for restraint and prevention, not blame.

Civil Rights, Enforcement, and Accountability

- I support restoring nondiscrimination protections with clear guardrails.
- Civil rights without enforcement are performative and a failure of our republic.
- Governments do not get to selectively comply with court rulings. Citizens must have accessible, effective pathways to challenge unjust laws and decisions through transparent, due-process–based mechanisms.
- Deprivation of rights under color of law is not merely political: *it is illegal*.
- Enforcement—not symbolism—is the foundation of legitimacy.

When institutions violate these standards, consequences follow — including investigation, corrective action, loss of authority, or enforcement action as warranted. Civil-rights enforcement under this framework is grounded in **tangible harm and due process**, with accountability mechanisms designed to protect rights without arbitrariness.

Civil-rights enforcement under this framework is grounded in tangible harm, due process, and institutional accountability.

The structural failures that occur when enforcement mechanisms degrade — including administrative closure, inaccessible remedies, and unequal access to justice — are examined in detail in **Section IX: Law, Enforcement, and Color of Law** of this document.

Specific statutory and administrative reforms to restore effective civil-rights enforcement in Iowa, including reforms to the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, are outlined separately in my Legal Reform platform:

<https://wildwillpower.org/statewide-platform/legal-reform/repair-the-iowa-civil-rights-commission/>

Broader justice-access and accountability pathways are addressed in my Justice Reform and Institutional Accountability platform, which focuses on making courts, civil-rights enforcement, and constitutional remedies accessible and usable by Iowans through due-process–based reforms:

<https://wildwillpower.org/statewide-platform/people-empowering-justice-reforms/>

What This Framework Rejects

- Panic, punishment, and moral spectacle.
- Slogans in place of evidence.
- Institutional escalation without accountability.

- Provocation strategies that transfer backlash onto vulnerable people.
 - Treating children as political symbols.
 - Treating civil rights as optional.
-

The Path Forward

This framework offers Iowa a way out of the culture war:

- Protect children without cruelty.
- Restore adult civil rights without ideological overreach.
- Regulate institutions instead of punishing people.
- Replace escalation with stewardship.
- Govern with restraint, precision, and accountability.

This is not a campaign talking point.

It is a governing standard.

How This Document Is Structured

This document is intentionally written with some repetition. Each section is designed to stand on its own, so readers may scroll directly to the topics most relevant to them without losing context.

Because the subject matter is complex, this document begins with a voter skim guide that plainly states my positions across key issues, followed by deeper explanation and historical context.

Why This Statement Exists

Before outlining policy positions, it is necessary to explain how Iowa arrived at this moment — and why so much public trust has been lost along the way.

Very little of what we are debating today arose organically from Iowa communities. Much of this conflict was imported through national media cycles, advocacy strategies developed elsewhere, professional institutions operating at a distance from local accountability, and political actors who escalated uncertainty into absolutes and disagreement into moral combat. Iowans were not invited into a slow, local conversation shaped by lived experience and shared responsibility. We were dropped into a fully formed culture war, already polarized, and told to choose sides.

The consequences were predictable. Children were placed at the center of unresolved questions. Institutions exceeded their mandate. Civil-rights law — intended to remedy real harm — was increasingly used as a symbolic battlefield rather than a stabilizing safeguard. Over time, this weakened public confidence in the law itself, eroded trust in institutions, and left the most vulnerable people exposed to backlash they did not create and could not control.

Civil-rights protections endure only when they are precise, credible, and clearly tied to tangible harm. When they are repeatedly invoked in ways that appear primarily performative or provocative, public skepticism grows — and that skepticism does not fall on institutions or national movements. It falls on minorities with legitimate claims who must seek protection in an environment already cautious and strained. Preserving the moral and legal legitimacy of civil-rights law is not a concession to hostility; it is a condition of its survival.

Because I am an adult transgender woman, some readers may assume my positions mirror those promoted by national activists or partisan culture warriors. They do not. This statement exists to replace assumption with record. My views are shaped by lived experience, long-term research, and a commitment to governance rather than ideology.

These policies are being released early not because they define my campaign — they do not — but because clarity builds trust. Iowans should not have to guess where I stand on issues that affect families, children, public institutions, and civil rights. Leadership requires stating boundaries plainly, naming what went wrong honestly, and offering a path forward grounded in responsibility rather than escalation.

What Follows

The sections that follow explain:

- how Iowa’s culture war was imported, not homegrown
- how gender-related policy expanded far beyond its original intent
- where both political parties failed — in different ways
- how institutions lost public trust
- and what a responsible, enforceable, and humane path forward looks like

Table of Contents

Governance Without Political Theater: Restoring Law, Trust, and Dignity to Transgender Iowans	14
Political Narratives vs. Governing Reality: A Comparative Framework.....	15
Party Failure and Its Effects.....	18
Consequences on the Ground	18
Structural Breakdown of Accountability	19
I. Introduction and Context	21
How Iowa’s Culture War Was Imported.....	21
Economic Stress as an Escalation Multiplier.....	23
What Actually Went Wrong: Institutions Replaced Deliberation with Certainty	24
When Escalation Replaced Risk Assessment	24
II. Population Health, Hormones, and Political Distraction	25
Hormone-Disrupting Chemicals and Rising Gender Variance in Iowa	25
Why Iowa Families Face Higher Chemical Exposure	25
A Wake Up Call for Every Iowan	25
We Know Enough to Act — Waiting for Certainty Is Not Leadership	26
What This Evidence Suggests — and What It Does Not	27
Why Republicans and Democrats Both Fail to Respond Appropriately	27
Protecting Children Instead of Scapegoating Transgender People	28
A Shared Responsibility to Act Now	29
III. Children, Medicine, and Institutional Escalation	30
Why “Gender Identity” Was Added in 2007 — and What It Was <i>Not</i> Meant to Do	30
The Rule That Should Have Governed This from the Start	30
How Most Iowans Entered the Conversation Late — and Through Polarization.....	30
How Exceptional Cases Were Turned Into Norms Without Public Consent	31
The Medical Consequences That Could Not Be Reversed	32
What Happened When Concerns Were Raised.....	32
The Generational Split Inside the LGBTQ+ Movement	33
How Advocacy Turned into an Echo Chamber	33
How Dissent Was Labeled and Dialogue Shut Down	33
What Republicans Got Right — and How They Got It Wrong.....	34

How the Parties Failed Children in Different Ways	34
The Collision Everyone Refused to Stop	34
The Cultural Failure We Don't Like to Admit	35
The Leadership Gap I Am Running to Fill	35
Why Child Policy and Adult Medical Care Must Not Be Conflated.....	35
IV. Adult Medical Care — A Separate Ethical and Medical Question	36
Adult Gender Dysphoria and Medical Necessity	36
Adult Surgical Care and the Importance of Time	37
Restoring Adult Medical Care Without Trend-Based Expansion	38
V. Youth and Education Policy	39
Education Policy: Exposure, Saturation, and Neutrality	39
Student Clubs, Extracurricular Gaps, and Unintended Ideological Capture	40
Rebuilding Legal Protections With Guardrails	41
VI. When Enforcement Fails, Escalation Fills the Vacuum	42
The Satanic Temple: Symbolic Confrontation as a Stand-In for Enforcement.....	42
Faith, provocation, and moral misrepresentation	43
Governance over Identity	44
Drag Story Hour and Cultural Escalation	44
VII. Institutional Failure and the Displacement of Harm.....	47
Media and Institutional Incentives That Reward Escalation.....	47
Who Bore the Consequences	47
Legal Protection Versus Institutional Prescription	47
Movement Escalation and the Displacement of Consequence — How Backlash Travels Downward ...	48
Institutional Insulation and Unequal Risk	49
VIII. Women's Sports: Scapegoating Transgender Women Instead of Creating Workable Policy	51
Women's Sports Policy Without Defamation.....	51
Women's Sports Policy and Institutional Failure.....	52
IX. Law, Enforcement, and Color of Law	54
How Civil Rights Fail Without Repeal	54
Administrative Justice That Exists on Paper Only	54
Color of Law: When Authority Masks Illegality	55

The Courts Iowa Chose to Override	56
Why Injunction-Only Justice Failed	57
Advocacy Without Enforcement: A Structural Deficiency	57
What the Harmed Actually Received — and What They Did Not	58
Unjust Enrichment and the Absence of Restitution	58
Good Intent Has Not Remedied Real Continuing Injuries	59
Insult Added to Injury	59
“I Don’t Want to Pay for It” — What Actually Happened	60
Federal and Iowa Enforcement Pathways Already Exist	60
Closing Reflection.....	61
X. Responsibility, Maturity, and Public Trust Within the Transgender Community	64
Address to Younger Transgender Women	64
Responsibility as the Foundation of Trust	64
Standing with Our Sisters: Locker Rooms and Trauma Awareness.....	65
Why Law Requires Coherence (Gender Identity & Gender Expression).....	65
Identity and Expression Are Distinct — but Law Cannot Separate Them	66
When Identity and Expression Align, Protection Is Clear	66
What This Is Not: “Passing” or Stereotyping.....	67
Where Breakdown Occurs (Abolitionism, Fluidity, Compulsion)	67
Solidarity Without Coercion.....	68
Nonbinary Identity Is Not the Problem — Abolitionism Is.....	68
Gender Fluidity and the Limits of Mandate.....	69
Education and Accommodation Are Appropriate — Compulsion Is Not	69
A Durable Standard for Protection.....	70
XI. Clarifying Boundaries: Law, Institutions, and Responsibility	72
Gratitude for Advocacy and Lessons Learned	72
Problems Created by Overbroad Use of “Gender Identity”	72
Clarifying What I Am — and Am Not — Saying.....	73
Address to Nonbinary and Gender-Nonconforming Readers	74
XII. Rebuilding Trust.....	75
Rebuilding Trust Through Iowa-Based Voices.....	75

What a Measurement of Success Might Look Like	75
Recap	76
XIII. Restoring Public Trust: Faith, History, and Moral Restraint	77
A Deeper Historical Reckoning: Suppression and the Myth of Sudden Increase	77
A Necessary Moral Boundary: Difference Is Not Abuse.....	78
Law, Mercy, and Civil Order: A Christian Case for Restraint.....	78
What Restoring Protections Would Require	79
XIV. Conclusion.....	80
Path Forward	80
Address to Traditional Conservatives and Republicans.....	80
The Parable of the Collapsing Bridge	81
XV. Heal the Heartland — Heal the World	83
Appendix A — Questions from an Iowa Voter.....	84
Appendix B — Adult Medical Care and Why Waiting Matters.....	93
Appendix C — Relevant Federal Civil-Rights Statutes, Case Holdings, and Legal Frameworks.....	96
Appendix D — Iowa Civil-Rights Statutes, Case Holdings, and Accountability Frameworks	101
Bibliography (Chicago Manual)	104

Governance Without Political Theater: Restoring Law, Trust, and Basic Dignity to Transgender Iowans

Public debate on transgender-related policy in the United States has largely collapsed into two competing political narratives. These narratives dominate media coverage, institutional behavior, and partisan messaging, yet neither provides a stable basis for governance.

On the political right, transgender people are frequently framed as symbolic threats—treated as evidence of moral collapse, institutional capture, or danger to children and women. This framing has driven punitive legislation, broad prohibitions, and the dismissal of civil-rights protections as illegitimate or expendable.

On the political left, transgender identity is often treated as morally self-validating and beyond contestation. Policy is frequently advanced through advocacy, institutional norm-setting, and symbolic affirmation, while unresolved questions—especially those involving children, sex-based categories, and enforceability—are treated as settled. Concerns are dismissed as prejudice rather than addressed as governance problems.

Both approaches substitute ideology for administration. Both rely on escalation rather than restraint. And both have produced predictable backlash that has fallen most heavily on the very people civil-rights law was meant to protect.

The following framework does not argue from identity or party alignment. It evaluates each approach based on outcomes: legal durability, institutional credibility, enforceability, and the distribution of risk when policy fails.

Political Narratives vs. Governing Reality: A Comparative Framework

Policy Domain	Common Right-Wing Projection (rhetoric + policy posture)	Common Left-Wing Projection (rhetoric + institutional posture)	Governing Standard I Will Apply (enforceable, harm-reduction, restores rule of law)	Illustrative public examples (not endorsements)
Core narrative about trans people	Frames trans women as <i>deceptive males</i> (“men pretending to be women”), often linked to threat narratives	Frames identity as morally authoritative; treats dissent as prejudice rather than a policy disagreement	Treats transgender adults as real people with real civil-rights interests , but rejects slogans as substitutes for workable standards	“Men pretending to be women” appears repeatedly in prominent conservative messaging and coverage of GOP political conflict (The Washington Post)
Civil rights: legitimacy and scope	Often depicts protections as “special rights”; supports rollback or narrowing	Treats civil rights as affirmation/recognition; tends to expand scope rapidly via institutions	Civil rights must be precise, durable, and tied to tangible harm —otherwise legitimacy collapses and backlash hits minorities	Iowa’s removal of protections for gender identity has been reported as a major rollback (Little Village)
Children & irreversible medical decisions	Uses child-protection framing, often with <i>panic/spectacle</i> or blanket bans	Uses “lifesaving/settled science” framing; institutions often move fast and treat uncertainty as resolved	Restraint for minors where outcomes are irreversible and evidence is contested; protect adults’ autonomy	Example of “child abuse” framing in policy: Abbott directive and resulting fear/controversy (Texas) (Texas.gov)
Schools: role and parental authority	Pushes suppressive or punitive approaches; bans and surveillance dynamics	Emphasizes inclusion training, identity frameworks, and in some places institution-first decision-making	Schools should ensure safety and anti-bullying without steering identity development ; parents remain central	Real-world conflicts around how schools handle identity, disclosure, and policy are recurring in U.S. coverage; polarization increases policy

Policy Domain	Common Right-Wing Projection (rhetoric + policy posture)	Common Left-Wing Projection (rhetoric + institutional posture)	Governing Standard I Will Apply (enforceable, harm-reduction, restores rule of law)	Illustrative public examples (not endorsements)
Speech: pronouns, misgendering, and law	Tolerates mockery; may protect intentional misgendering under “free speech” framing	Drifts toward quasi-compulsion in institutional norms; pushes harassment standards that can be perceived as compelled speech	No compelled belief/speech by law , but harassment is still harassment; law should target conduct that produces concrete harm	whiplash (The Washington Post) EEOC harassment guidance became a major flashpoint, with critics arguing it goes beyond Bostock; litigation followed (AP News)
Women’s spaces & bathrooms	Treats access as invasion risk; elevates worst-case scenarios	Treats restriction as bigotry; “no boundaries” vibe in institutional messaging	Use privacy + foreseeability of harm + workable accommodation , not absolutism	“Women at risk / men in women’s restrooms” has been a central conservative framing in national coverage (The Washington Post)
Sports policy	Treats trans women athletes as cheaters/threats	Uses categorical slogan (“trans women are women”) as policy substitute	Protect women’s sports without defaming transgender women, who deserve dignity and respect – not harassment and bigotry. Explore a new Open League based on weight class and body type. Try alternatives.	Sports is a recurring ignition point in U.S. coverage and partisan messaging (AP News)

Policy Domain	Common Right-Wing Projection (rhetoric + policy posture)	Common Left-Wing Projection (rhetoric + institutional posture)	Governing Standard I Will Apply (enforceable, harm-reduction, restores rule of law)	Illustrative public examples (not endorsements)
Drag / provocation / culture-war escalation	Conflates drag/trans/sexual threat; “groomer” adjacency	Treats provocation as resistance; institutions defend escalation as moral courage	Distinguish expression from institutional programming choices ; choose strategies that don’t bring backlash onto vulnerable people. Focus on adult audiences.	Media ecosystems reward escalation; backlash tends to land on ordinary people, not institutions (common dynamic in coverage) (The Guardian)
Enforcement: what each side actually does	Dismisses rights as illegitimate and supports rollback; some policies attempt to treat care as abuse or invite investigations	Advocacy-heavy, enforcement-light: lots of statements/litigation posture; enforcement capacity often weak, bureaucratic, or politically constrained	Make enforcement the centerpiece: civil rights that aren’t enforced are performative; rights that are rolled back become cruelty-by-statute	Iowa governance changes diminishing civil-rights institutional power have been reported (commission shifted toward an advisory role; authority reduced) (Iowa Capital Dispatch)
“Color of law” framing	Often denies that state actions can constitute rights deprivation; frames government as protecting children/tradition	Often avoids criminal-law language and focuses on messaging/advocacy; under-names state abuse of authority	Claims that willful deprivation of rights <i>by officials using official power</i> should be treated with the seriousness of “ under color of law ” standards (without turning everything into theater)	DOJ explains “under color of law” (18 U.S.C. § 242) and what it means for officials acting beyond authority while purporting to act officially (Department of Justice)

From Institutional Escalation to Backlash: Why Governance Failed

What failed here was governance.

Over time, the political right treated civil rights as discretionary—subject to repeal, selective recognition, or nonenforcement. State power was used to withdraw legal protections from a small and politically vulnerable population, often denying that those rights existed at all. Rather than regulating institutions that exceeded their authority, Republican leadership targeted individuals. Child protection was converted into spectacle and punishment, while institutional misconduct went uncorrected.

The political left failed differently. Rights were announced, but enforcement was weak, inconsistent, or avoided. Institutions were permitted to exceed their mandate without clear legal standards or limits. Unresolved questions—particularly those involving children, sex-based categories, and institutional authority—were treated as settled by consensus rather than governed by law. Legal precision gave way to messaging. Accountability receded as public trust eroded.

Neither approach enforced limits. Neither governed consequences. One side escalated fear. The other dismissed legitimate concern. Both abdicated responsibility.

Civil rights that are not enforced are not rights.

Civil rights withdrawn by the state are acts of government cruelty.

Civil rights that lose legal clarity do not survive public backlash.

Party Failure and Its Effects

Republican leadership responded to uncertainty with punishment and overreach. Instead of regulating institutions, enforcing due process, and protecting innocent adults, they pursued sweeping prohibitions and collective blame. Law was used as a weapon rather than as a stabilizing force.

Democratic leadership responded with insulation and paralysis. Instead of setting boundaries, enforcing standards, and correcting institutional excess, they relied on advocacy consensus and symbolic affirmation. Legal precision was treated as optional even as institutions drifted beyond their authority.

Neither side maintained order. Neither side protected the vulnerable. Governance failed.

Consequences on the Ground

The consequences did not fall on those who exercised power.

Most Iowans encountered these issues abruptly, through national polarization rather than local governance. Adult transgender women—those with decades of lived experience and the most at stake—were discussed, categorized, and acted upon without meaningful consultation. Decisions made by distant institutions produced direct and lasting harm.

As institutional discipline eroded, opportunists filled the vacuum. Public discourse collapsed into extremes. Transgender adults became symbols rather than citizens. Backlash intensified against those without political insulation. When institutions abandon restraint, harm travels downward. This is not theory. It is a pattern.

Structural Breakdown of Accountability

This failure was systemic.

Modern political parties operate without internal mechanisms that require adherence to rule of law, separation of powers, or institutional limits. In a rigid two-party system, incentives reward loyalty, escalation, and narrative dominance rather than legality or restraint. When party discipline overrides constitutional discipline, executive agencies drift, legislatures posture, courts are undermined, and civil rights become conditional rather than durable.

That is not acceptable.

A functioning government enforces limits. It disciplines institutions. It protects minorities through law, not rhetoric. It intervenes early to prevent escalation rather than exploiting it after the fact.

My governing standard is direct:

- Enforce the law as written.
- Correct institutional overreach.
- Protect children without punishing innocent adults.
- Restore civil rights with clear standards and real enforcement.
- Hold officials accountable when they exceed their authority under color of law.

That is how order is maintained.

That is how the vulnerable are protected.

That is how a government earns legitimacy.

Enforcement and accountability are not aspirational in this framework.

The mechanisms for regulating institutions, disciplining abuse of authority, enforcing civil rights, and restoring separation of powers are addressed in detail in my Justice Reform platform, which

outlines reforms to courts, prosecutors, civil-rights enforcement, and public accountability systems:

<https://wildwillpower.org/statewide-platform/people-empowering-justice-reforms/>

The section that follows explains how Iowa arrived at this failure—and why lawful, restrained executive leadership is required to restore stability.

I. Introduction and Context

This section documents how Iowa’s traditionally local, deliberative culture was disrupted by imported political machinery from both the right and the left. Understanding this history is essential to distinguishing organic community concern from externally driven escalation — and to avoiding the same mistakes again.

How Iowa’s Culture War Was Imported

For much of Iowa’s history, our civic institutions were deeply local, even amid real social disagreement. Churches focused on congregational life and charity. Nonprofits focused on service. Schools worked with parents. Disagreements were real, but they were worked through slowly, face-to-face, with a shared understanding that neighbors had to keep living together afterward.

That began to change in the late 1990s — not because Iowans suddenly became more hostile or more radical, but because new political machinery entered the state.

The First Shift: Professionalized Ideology Enters Iowa (Late 1990s–2008)

For the first time, Iowa saw the rise of explicitly ideological policy-advocacy nonprofits operating under tax-deductible status. Organizations like the Iowa Family Policy Center (founded in 1996, later known as The FAMiLY Leader) represented a structural shift. Religious belief itself was nothing new in Iowa — faith has always been central here — but religion organized as permanent professional political infrastructure, closely tied to national donor networks and messaging pipelines, was new.¹

This mattered because it changed how debates became framed in our state. Instead of local discussions about school safety or community standards, Iowans increasingly heard nationalized language — “special rights,” “moral threats,” “ideological capture” — imported wholesale from groups like Focus on the Family and similar organizations. That language did not grow out of Iowa’s day-to-day experience. It arrived packaged, funded, and ready to deploy.

A few years later, a second imported force entered the same vacuum — from the opposite direction.

¹ Iowa Family Policy Center, Articles of Incorporation, State of Iowa, 1996; see also Grant Rodgers, “Bob Vander Plaats Rebrands Iowa Family Policy Center as The FAMiLY Leader,” Des Moines Register, August 10, 2010. The Iowa Family Policy Center, later rebranded as The FAMiLY Leader, represents an early example of nationally networked, professionally staffed ideological advocacy organizations operating in Iowa under tax-exempt status.

The Second Shift: Civil Rights Expansion Meets Nationalized Advocacy (2009–2014)

In 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in *Varnum v. Brien* made Iowa the third state in the nation, and the first in the Midwest, to recognize marriage equality. That ruling put Iowa on the national map.²

In response, national civil-rights organizations and donor networks rapidly expanded their footprint in Iowa. State-level LGBTQ advocacy organizations, alongside national partners, began distributing educational materials, training programs, and “best practices” developed outside the state. The result was rapid institutional change without meaningful local deliberation, parental input, or public consent.³

This shift occurred quickly — and in a rural state whose governance has long emphasized family involvement, local control, and incremental change. It also occurred at a moment when Iowa’s local institutions, particularly in education, had already been weakened by underfunding and administrative centralization. Many of these materials bypassed ordinary processes of review and dialogue, treating serious social and medical questions as settled fact rather than as matters requiring careful, community-based deliberation.

Language, Speed, and the Collapse of Shared Meaning (2014–2020)

Prior to roughly 2014, Iowa’s public institutions did not operate using concepts such as *nonbinary*, *genderfluid*, or *gender-expansive*. These terms were absent from state law, school policy, and legislative debate, circulating mainly within limited online and academic circles rather than in public-facing institutions. Their rapid institutional adoption in the years that followed marked a sharp departure from how gender identity had previously been understood and governed in Iowa.⁴

Between approximately 2014 and 2020, however, these terms entered mainstream American and Iowan usage with remarkable speed, fundamentally reshaping how “gender identity” was

² *Varnum v. Brien*, 763 N.W.2d 862 (Iowa 2009). The Iowa Supreme Court unanimously held that limiting civil marriage to opposite-sex couples violated the equal protection clause of the Iowa Constitution, making Iowa the third state and the first Midwestern state to recognize same-sex marriage.

³ One Iowa, Annual Reports (2009–2014); National LGBTQ Task Force, State Equality Index Reports (2010–2015). Following *Varnum v. Brien*, national civil-rights organizations significantly expanded funding, training, and policy coordination in Iowa, including standardized educational and institutional materials developed outside the state.

⁴ LexisNexis State Legislative Tracking; Iowa Department of Education policy archives; Des Moines Register digital archive (1995–2020). Prior to approximately 2014, terms such as *nonbinary*, *genderfluid*, and *gender-expansive* appear rarely in Iowa legislative records or K–12 policy materials, with widespread institutional adoption accelerating after 2014.

understood, applied, and contested. This linguistic shift became one of the single most important catalysts of the modern culture wars over schools, language, youth identity, and public institutions.

Until that point, Iowa’s public understanding of gender identity largely aligned with the late-twentieth-century medical framework: transgender individuals were understood primarily as transsexual adults undergoing or having completed medical and social transition. When Iowa lawmakers added “gender identity” to the Iowa Civil Rights Act in 2007, they were overwhelmingly thinking about adults facing discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations — not youth identity categories, sports eligibility, or a movement-driven redefinition of sex-based language.⁵

Language then changed quickly. Terminology multiplied. Pronoun pins, email-signature pronouns, and scripted introductions shifted from optional to expected. Many Iowans felt their daily lives were being micromanaged by norms they were never asked to discuss or consent to.

These changes were often introduced not through transparent educational processes, but through NGO advocacy, social media, and institutional pressure. Rather than responding to concerns with dialogue and adjustment, many advocates doubled down. Predictably, those who felt excluded or unheard moved politically to the right, because they could not morally justify aligning with the left, and there was nowhere else to go.

In 2007, roughly a dozen Republicans supported adding gender identity to the Iowa Civil Rights Act. Around 2016, with the rise of MAGA politics, we saw a sharp break between traditional conservatism and grievance-driven politics — accelerating polarization.

Economic Stress as an Escalation Multiplier

One additional factor must be named, because it quietly amplifies every conflict it touches: economic strain. Over the past two decades, many Iowa families have experienced wage stagnation, rising healthcare and housing costs, farm consolidation, and the hollowing out of local institutions. When families are under sustained economic pressure, communities become more brittle. Trust thins. Anxiety rises. In that environment, cultural and identity conflicts often become proxy battlegrounds for deeper insecurity — not because those issues are unimportant, but because they are visible, emotionally charged, and easier to fight about than structural economic decline. This does not excuse institutional overreach or political exploitation, but it helps explain why escalation spread so quickly once it began.

⁵ Iowa General Assembly, *2007 Iowa Acts, Chapter 191*; Iowa House Judiciary Committee debate transcripts, 2007. Legislative discussion surrounding the addition of “gender identity” to the Iowa Civil Rights Act focused primarily on adult discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

What Actually Went Wrong: Institutions Replaced Deliberation with Certainty

The early Safe Schools and anti-bullying efforts in Iowa were not “weaponized” at their origin. They were pragmatic, harm-reduction-focused, and consistent with Iowa values.

What went wrong later was institutional overconfidence.

Unsettled social and medical questions — especially involving children — began to be presented as morally settled. Disagreement was increasingly framed not as democratic deliberation, but as harm.

That produced two predictable outcomes.

First, moderate and conservative Iowans who might otherwise have supported adult nondiscrimination protections felt shut out and dismissed.

Second — and this matters most to me — transsexual adults, whom the 2007 protections were designed to protect, became collateral damage. We were associated with ideas, policies, and cultural strategies we did not author and did not control. Within LGBTQ spaces, those of us who raised concerns were labeled “transmedicalists” or “truscum,” sidelined by a movement that had metastasized around an honest civil-rights protection.

The moment transgender existence came across as a mass political advocacy movement — rather than a civil-rights concern rooted in lived reality — backlash became inevitable and landed on the most vulnerable.

Movements rely on absolutes, flatten complexity, accelerate consensus, and prioritize visibility. Lived realities are contextual, uneven, slow, and deeply affected by backlash. That is political gravity.

When Escalation Replaced Risk Assessment

This dynamic created the conditions in which serious questions about health, development, and risk were either ignored or weaponized — setting the stage for the population-level issues examined next.

II. Population Health, Hormones, and Political Distraction

This section examines population-level environmental risk factors that are largely absent from the public debate — and how their omission has distorted policy responses.

Hormone-Disrupting Chemicals and Rising Gender Variance in Iowa

There is one factor in these debates that is rarely discussed — not because it is fringe, but because it is inconvenient for everyone.

Hormone-disrupting chemicals.

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) are substances that interfere with the body’s hormone systems. They are commonly used in modern agriculture, plastics, and industrial products. Chemicals such as atrazine, phthalates, and PCBs are neither rare nor hypothetical. They are well documented — and Iowans are commonly exposed to them through everyday contact.⁶

This is established fact. It is not speculation.

Why Iowa Families Face Higher Chemical Exposure

For generations, Iowa children have grown up immersed in agriculture. Detasseling corn is a rite of passage. Walking through wet, dew-covered fields during early and pre-puberty is normal here — and that means repeated, real-world exposure to agricultural chemicals at critical stages of hormonal development. Wet plants make it easier for those chemicals to pass through the skin.

Atrazine, one of the most widely used herbicides in American corn production, has been detected repeatedly in groundwater and surface water across the Midwest, including Iowa.⁷

A Wake Up Call for Every Iowan

Three facts exist at the same time — and they are rarely discussed together:

- **Hormone-disrupting chemicals are known to alter sexual development in living organisms.**

⁶ Endocrine Society, “Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals,” *Endocrine Reviews* 36, no. 6 (2015): E1–E150.

⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Atrazine Updates, 2003–2023*, <https://www.epa.gov>.

- **Iowans are widely exposed to these chemicals** through agriculture, water systems, and daily environmental contact.
- **The number of people identifying as transgender has increased sharply over the past two decades.**

If our political response to these realities is to exploit fear and prejudice against transgender Iowans — while ignoring a potential public-health issue affecting hormones across the population — then our priorities are dangerously misaligned.

The political theater must end.

Inciting harassment through repeated acts of defamation, scapegoating, and stripping civil rights from transgender people does nothing to protect children. It diverts attention from the very conditions that may be placing children at risk.

This does not invalidate transgender people’s lived reality or justify discrimination; it strengthens the case for protecting children from environmental risk while safeguarding adult autonomy.

We Know Enough to Act — Waiting for Certainty Is Not Leadership

We do not need perfect answers to recognize a warning.

We already know that chemicals can profoundly alter the human reproductive system — we see this plainly in medicine. Transgender people take hormones, and those hormones reliably and predictably change sexual development. Given that reality, it is not reasonable to pretend that widespread, ongoing chemical exposure could not affect human development simply because every mechanism has not yet been mapped.

We do not wait decades to confirm that an electric fence is dangerous. We act when the risk is clear and the cost of delay falls on children.

When the stakes involve childhood development, family health, and long-term outcomes, correlation is enough to justify caution. Waiting five, ten, or twenty more years while studies accumulate and pundits debate would mean knowingly allowing Iowans to absorb a risk I am not willing to accept.

Responsible leadership does not hide behind uncertainty.

It errs on the side of protection when warning signs are this clear.

Human Sexual Development Has Always Varied — Exposure Has Changed

Medical research has long documented that prenatal hormone exposure plays a role in brain sexual differentiation, and that this process does not always align neatly with external anatomy.

There are dozens of known differences of sexual development (DSDs) — genetic and hormonal variations that have existed throughout human history.⁸

Taken together, this complicates the claim that there are “suddenly more” LGBTQ people because of ideology or social contagion.

Human variation did not suddenly appear.

What *has* changed is:

- chemical exposure,
- diagnostic visibility,
- social language,
- and institutional response.

What This Evidence Suggests — and What It Does Not

I am not saying this explains why transgender people exist.

I am saying that across recorded history, transgender identity has been rare — and the sharp increase we are seeing today raises serious questions about whether widespread chemical exposure may be contributing to numbers far higher than nature alone would produce.

This evidence does not explain transgender identity; it explains why restraint, not panic, is the only responsible response.

Even if environmental factors influence prevalence, civil rights do not depend on origin. Civil rights attach to harm and conduct — not theory, cause, or category.

Why Republicans and Democrats Both Fail to Respond Appropriately

Over time, the two major parties have developed predictable failures in how they respond to risk.

Republicans tend to delay or deny environmental and public-health warnings in the name of economic protection and tax policy. Democrats tend to commission studies, monitoring programs, and expert panels — while treating real-world exposure as something that can wait for perfect consensus.

⁸ Melissa Hines, “Prenatal Testosterone and Gender-Related Behaviour,” *Endocrine Development* 8 (2005): 1–13; Dick F. Swaab, “Sexual Differentiation of the Human Brain,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 8, no. 2 (2007): 91–98.

Both approaches leave families unprotected.

Leadership does not choose between science and action. It does both.

I learned this working in wilderness survival in the lower Sierra Nevada Mountains. Rattlesnakes were known to lay between craggy rocks during the day. We didn't send in hikers one by one to see what percentage got bit, or at what time of the day they were most likely to get bit: we grabbed a walking stick and knocked it loudly on the ground in front of us to alert the snakes, or we went around the rocks.

You do not gamble with lives while waiting for certainty. You act to reduce risk first, and study the terrain as you go.

Public health works the same way. When warning signs are present and the cost of delay is borne by children, restraint and decisiveness are not opposites — they are partners.

That is how my approach to governance will differ: protect first, study continuously, and never treat human lives as acceptable collateral while politics catches up.

Protecting Children Instead of Scapegoating Transgender People

At this point, a hard truth has to be stated plainly.

Much of the public anxiety surrounding transgender people — especially transgender adults — has been redirected away from real, population-wide risks and toward a politically convenient target. That redirection has been deliberate.

If Iowa is facing widespread exposure to hormone-disrupting chemicals during critical stages of childhood development, then transgender people are not the threat — they are the canary in the coal mine.

Blaming transgender Iowans does not protect children. It does not reduce exposure. It does not improve water quality. It does not strengthen families. It does not address agriculture, chemical regulation, or public health oversight. It only diverts attention — and in doing so, allows the underlying risk to persist unchecked.

Fear-based politics has replaced responsible inquiry. Scapegoating has replaced stewardship.

That is not leadership.

Leadership does not respond to uncertainty by creating enemies. It responds by identifying risks, reducing exposure, protecting children, and refusing to sacrifice human beings to maintain political narratives.

A Shared Responsibility to Act Now

If you are worried about children, then we share the same priority.

Protecting children means confronting uncomfortable possibilities without panic. It means acting before certainty is complete, when the cost of delay is borne by families. And it means refusing to let fear override judgment.

Scientific uncertainty is not a license for denial.

It is not a justification for cruelty.

And it is not an excuse for political theater.

It is a call for discernment, restraint, and action.

We can protect children **and** uphold civil rights.

We can reduce risk **and** continue research.

We can govern without turning neighbors into enemies.

That is the standard this moment requires — and it is the standard I will govern by.

III. Children, Medicine, and Institutional Escalation

This section examines how a narrow civil-rights protection for adults evolved—without public consent—into a set of institutional practices involving children, medicine, and identity that outpaced evidence, ethical restraint, and local governance. It traces how good intentions, nationalized narratives, and institutional pressure combined to override caution, sideline lived experience, and produce irreversible outcomes. The failure described here is not that concerns were raised—but that they were systematically ignored until backlash replaced judgment.

Why “Gender Identity” Was Added in 2007 — and What It Was *Not* Meant to Do

When Iowa added “gender identity” to the Civil Rights Act and anti-bullying law in 2007, lawmakers were addressing a narrow, concrete problem: discrimination against adults and harassment of teenagers. For older transgender Iowans, this was a major victory — long overdue protection that allowed people to work, live, and access public life without fear. It was relief. It was stability. And it was never intended to open the door to childhood medicalization or institutionalized identity pathways.

At that time, there was no public discussion in Iowa about puberty blockers, elementary-age social transition, pronoun mandates, or schools acting as gateways into medical decision-making. That world did not exist here yet.

The Rule That Should Have Governed This from the Start

When evidence is incomplete and consequences are irreversible, restraint is not neglect. It is protection.

Children cannot evaluate lifelong tradeoffs. They cannot consent to permanent loss of future options. Adults do not get to outsource judgment to ideology simply because a topic is uncomfortable.

This failure was not accidental. It was the result of political incentives overriding restraint.

How Most Iowans Entered the Conversation Late — and Through Polarization

Most Iowans did not grow up thinking about transgender people at all. Until roughly 2015, the issue barely registered in daily life. When it finally did enter public awareness, it arrived suddenly — through national media, social platforms, and polarized political messaging from the

right and the left. Iowans did not encounter this issue through neighbors, lived relationships, or slow local conversation. They encountered it through conflict.

The people with the longest view — adult transgender women who transitioned before this issue became nationalized — were largely absent from the conversation at its most critical moments. Not because we had nothing to say, but because we were spoken about instead of consulted. Decisions were made *for* us, *about* us, and *around* us — often by institutions far removed from Iowa life — while the people with decades of lived medical and social experience were sidelined as politically inconvenient.

That absence mattered. When a society learns about a vulnerable group only through extremes, nuance collapses. And when those with the deepest knowledge are excluded, escalation becomes almost inevitable.

Many of us watched this unfold in real time — and the generational divide explains much of what followed.

Younger LGBTQ+ people, particularly Gen Z and younger Millennials, came of age **inside** a fully formed vocabulary and a unified national narrative about gender and identity. For them, the language, assumptions, and boundaries arrived already set. That was the world they inherited.

Anyone over about thirty-five watched something very different happen.

We lived through the original addition of gender identity protections. We remember the questions no one imagined would ever need to be asked. And we watched, step by step, as those unanswered questions were later met not with local conversation, but with hardline positions imported from national institutions and broadcast into Iowa life through media, nonprofits, professional organizations, and staff trainings. Local institutions adopted those answers wholesale.

Anyone who did not match the approved narrative was labeled.

We saw institutions miseducate the public, speak in absolutes, and train people to sort disagreement into moral categories rather than questions worth examining. We watched labels replace listening and dissent become disqualifying. We were not consulted in earnest — we were managed around.

That pattern matters, because it explains how good intentions hardened into rigid doctrine, how uncertainty was flattened into certainty, and how policy escaped public control. The consequences of that failure — and the accountability it demands — will be addressed later.

How Exceptional Cases Were Turned Into Norms Without Public Consent

For several years, national media stories about transgender children — including early coverage of Jazz Jennings — were understood as rare and exceptional cases. They were not treated as templates for ordinary families. Most parents assumed these situations were unusual, handled privately, and approached with extreme caution and heavy medical oversight.

That changed.

Between roughly 2013 and 2018, identity frameworks began reaching children through channels that bypassed parents, school boards, and public deliberation altogether. Social media, peer networks, counseling norms, nonprofit toolkits, and staff trainings introduced concepts that had never been debated locally and never approved through transparent public process. What had once been framed as exceptional became normalized — not because Iowa families asked for it, but because institutions decided it for them.

The Medical Consequences That Could Not Be Reversed

The consequences were not theoretical.

Jazz Jennings was placed on puberty blockers at age eleven. Years later, when Dr. Marci Bowers — a prominent gender surgeon and trans woman — performed vaginoplasty, Jennings lacked sufficient genital tissue for standard surgical techniques. Surgeons were forced to use abdominal grafting instead. That tissue does not contain the same nerve structure or sensory capacity as penile or scrotal tissue. The result was permanently limited surgical options and reduced sexual sensation — consequences that cannot be undone and were not fully understood or disclosed when treatment began.

Dr. Bowers has since warned publicly that early puberty suppression increases surgical complications and permanently narrows adult options.⁹

That is not politics. That is outcome. Outcomes like this are precisely why irreversible interventions demand the highest standard of caution—especially when applied to children.

What Happened When Concerns Were Raised

Those of us who raised these concerns early — including adult transgender women who had studied these issues for decades — were often ignored or dismissed. Not debated. Not engaged. We were told what “the studies say.” We were told we were not qualified. We were told to defer.

⁹ Marci L. Bowers, remarks at WPATH Symposium, Montreal, September 2022; Abigail Shrier, “Top Trans Doctors Blow the Whistle,” *The Free Press*, March 2023. Dr. Bowers has publicly stated that early puberty suppression can increase surgical complexity and permanently limit adult surgical options.

In my own case, when I raised specific, documented concerns — including the Jazz Jennings outcome and the backlash already affecting my safety and livelihood — I was told deference had to be given to national medical bodies, even when local experience suggested harm. That pointed to a structural gap — one we must now close.

The Generational Split Inside the LGBTQ+ Movement

At the same time, the internal makeup of the LGBTQ+ movement shifted.

Older transgender women — many of whom had lived quietly for decades and watched this entire arc unfold — understood the original purpose of civil-rights protections and the risks of moving too fast. But younger LGBTQ+ people, who now make up the majority of the movement, largely learned about these issues through a post-2015 lens. Their understanding came not from lived experience or long-term observation, but from national advocacy organizations, media campaigns, and institutional messaging.

Organizations like One Iowa, GLAAD, and similar national partners provided language, structure, and protection at a time when LGBTQ+ people felt under attack. That support mattered.

But it also narrowed the conversation.

How Advocacy Turned into an Echo Chamber

As political pressure intensified, advocacy spaces closed ranks. Solidarity became the priority. A unified message became the shield. Dialogue, dissent, and internal debate began to feel dangerous — even when raised in good faith by people with decades of experience.

National positions were adopted quickly. Talking points hardened. Authority flowed upward to institutions like the American Medical Association and the Endocrine Society. And a new posture took hold: *the science is settled; your concerns are not relevant*.

That posture did not read the room.

How Dissent Was Labeled and Dialogue Shut Down

Instead of engagement, dissent was labeled: “transmedicalist,” “far-right,” “right-wing,” “Christian nationalist.” On the other side, labels mirrored back just as fast: “leftist,” “antifa,” “communist.” Soon, all transgender women were reduced to “men,” and anyone who refused to follow that line had nowhere to stand.

This is not unique to one side. As solidarity becomes the social demand, labeling becomes the enforcement mechanism. Once that happens, the middle collapses.

What Republicans Got Right — and How They Got It Wrong

When decision-making moves upward and outward — away from local communities, lived experience, and accountability — warning signs are missed. The Jazz Jennings case did not justify cruelty toward LGBTQ people. But it *did* validate the concern that early medical intervention carries irreversible consequences that were not being honestly discussed.

Republicans were not wrong to worry that something had gone too far.

They were wrong to treat people as the problem instead of institutions — and to punish transgender adults by cutting off lawful medical care in response to political disagreement and religious belief, rather than meeting their constitutional duty to govern neutrally.

Instead of regulating institutions and slowing escalation, they punished people. Instead of protecting children *and* civil rights, they collapsed the two into a moral panic that harmed innocent adults and fueled dehumanization.

How the Parties Failed Children in Different Ways

Republicans: Panic, Punishment, and Overreach

Republicans responded to uncertainty with panic and punishment. They collapsed legitimate concern into sweeping bans, moral accusations, and political theater. Instead of regulating institutions, they targeted people. Instead of restraint, they chose overreaction — turning a serious child-protection issue into a culture war that punished adults who had done nothing wrong.

Democrats: Echo Chambers and Paralysis

Democrats responded to uncertainty with paralysis. Faced with unresolved questions, they retreated into expert panels, advocacy consensus, and slogans like “the science is settled” — even when it clearly was not. They spoke to one another, not to parents. They governed inside an echo chamber while losing the public they assumed would follow.

The Collision Everyone Refused to Stop

Both things can be true at once:

- Legitimate concerns were raised and ignored.
- The backlash that followed was unjustified and destructive.

Leadership’s job is to prevent that collision — not exploit it.

The Cultural Failure We Don’t Like to Admit

We blame politicians.

We blame parties.

We blame institutions.

That’s familiar. It’s comfortable. And it lets us avoid responsibility.

But the underlying failure was cultural.

We empowered institutions that rewarded certainty over judgment. We tolerated environments where disagreement became betrayal. We allowed labeling to replace listening. Until we grow up and do this differently, the outcomes we get will continue to reflect the systems we enable.

The Leadership Gap I Am Running to Fill

Republicans acted recklessly.

Democrats acted insularly.

Children needed adults who could do both things at once: **slow down and act.**

That is the leadership gap I am running to fill.

Why Child Policy and Adult Medical Care Must Not Be Conflated

The failures described in this section concern children, institutions, and the collapse of adult restraint—not the legitimacy of medical care for adults with persistent gender dysphoria.

Conflating these questions has caused profound harm: it allowed institutional escalation around children to proceed without scrutiny, while later backlash swept up adults whose medical decisions were lawful, deliberate, and necessary. The next section draws a clear and essential distinction—one responsible governance must maintain—between protecting children from irreversible harm and protecting adults’ access to medically necessary care.

IV. Adult Medical Care — A Separate Ethical and Medical Question

This section affirms that medically necessary care for adults with persistent gender dysphoria is legitimate healthcare — not a trend or political statement. It explains how conflation with youth debates delegitimized adult care and caused real harm when protections collapsed.

Adult Gender Dysphoria and Medical Necessity

I want to state something clearly and without ambiguity: for adults with persistent, clinically significant gender dysphoria, gender-affirming medical care is medically necessary healthcare. It is not a trend, a lifestyle choice, or a political statement. It is treatment — and when it is denied, delayed, or politicized, real harm follows. Restoring adult care is about repairing harm already done — not creating new pathways or incentives.

Adult transgender people who have undergone medical transition deserve to be honored, not stigmatized. They made serious, often difficult medical decisions in consultation with licensed professionals, usually after years of dysphoria, evaluation, and personal struggle. Their care was not experimental, casual, or undertaken lightly. It was pursued in order to function, to work, to form relationships, and to live.

At the same time, adult medical transition and childhood policy are not the same issue and should never be treated as if they are. Recognizing medical necessity for adults does not predetermine policy for minors, just as adult consent standards do not apply to children in any other area of medicine.

Adults possess legal capacity, fully developed bodies, and the right to informed consent. Minors do not. Schools are not clinics. Teachers are not physicians. And the standards that apply to adult medical care cannot simply be scaled downward to children or institutionalized through school systems.

Protecting access to medically necessary care for adults does not require — and must not be used to justify — premature medicalization, institutional pressure, or irreversible intervention for minors. These are distinct questions, governed by different ethical standards, developmental realities, and legal responsibilities.

Conflating them has harmed everyone involved.

Disagreement about where to draw ethical lines for minors does not negate the reality that some young people experience distress — it reflects uncertainty about how best to respond without causing irreversible harm.

Those of us who have already transitioned medically are not abstractions in a culture war. We are workers, parents, neighbors, veterans, caregivers, and taxpayers. Many of us transitioned quietly,

long before this issue became politicized, and simply want to live our lives without being turned into symbols or warnings.

It is unjust to retroactively question the legitimacy of our care, or to treat adult transition as suspect because of unresolved debates about youth policy. Doing so undermines trust in medicine, destabilizes lives that were built in good faith, and punishes people for decisions that were lawful, evidence-based, and necessary at the time they were made.

Honoring medically transitioned adults means protecting continuity of care, respecting settled medical decisions, and refusing to let backlash erase our dignity or our humanity.

I recognize that drawing this line will upset some advocates who believe gender-affirming medical frameworks should apply broadly, including to minors. I do not question the sincerity of their desire to reduce suffering. But sincerity alone is not a substitute for ethical restraint, developmental caution, or public trust. When the stakes involve children, disagreement is not cruelty — and boundaries are not betrayal.

As governor, I would support restoring coverage for medically necessary gender-affirming care for adults, grounded in established diagnostic criteria, clinical oversight, and informed consent. I would also insist on clear guardrails that prevent adult standards from being imposed on children, schools, or youth environments.

Adult healthcare and child welfare must be governed separately — with seriousness, humility, and restraint.

That distinction is not cruelty. It is responsible governance.

Adult Surgical Care and the Importance of Time

One reality rarely acknowledged in public debate is that adult transgender healthcare has advanced significantly — particularly for those who experience severe dysphoria related to facial features and social recognition.

Procedures such as facial feminization surgery (FFS), often mischaracterized as cosmetic, can dramatically reduce misgendering, harassment, and daily stress for transgender women. For many adults, this care improves safety, mental health, employability, and quality of life — not by enforcing conformity, but by alleviating a constant source of social friction.

This matters for youth policy.

The existence of effective adult interventions weakens the argument that irreversible medical decisions must occur in early adolescence to prevent lifelong harm. In many cases, the most responsible course is not acceleration, but patience — preserving bodily development and future options until informed adult consent is possible.

This is not an argument that transgender people must “pass,” nor that gender nonconformity is a failure. It is an argument that adults deserve access to care that reduces suffering — and that children deserve time, protection, and the knowledge that relief can exist later without forcing premature decisions now.

Waiting is not denial. Waiting is often what makes better outcomes possible.

For readers seeking a clearer understanding of adult-only medical options referenced here — and why their existence strengthens the case for restraint in youth policy — **a limited appendix is included at the end of this document.**

Restoring Adult Medical Care Without Trend-Based Expansion

We must restore medical coverage for transgender adults — while being honest about **medical necessity**.

Transgender healthcare became delegitimized in part because **medical need was conflated with personal choice**. That conflation increased costs for taxpayers and insurers while undermining the credibility of those who require treatment to function and survive. This distinction concerns insurance policy and clinical standards — not the legitimacy of transgender identity itself.

Medicare and public insurance should cover **medically necessary treatment** — not elective procedures pursued absent clinical indication.

Failing to draw that distinction harmed everyone involved.

Being transgender is not a trend.

Medical transition is not a lifestyle accessory.

Adults who require care should not be punished for the excesses of a movement that stopped making those distinctions.

V. Youth and Education Policy

This section outlines a framework for education that emphasizes parental involvement, institutional neutrality, and age-appropriate instruction. It explains the difference between exposure and saturation, and why schools must not replace families or medical judgment.

Education Policy: Exposure, Saturation, and Neutrality

A critical distinction must be made between institutional initiation and responsible adult response. The state's role is not to proactively introduce identity frameworks or medical pathways to minors, but to respond with care and restraint when responsible adults observe sustained, significant distress that does not resolve through time, support, or institutional neutrality. Noticeable dysphoria or misalignment that emerges without social prompting is fundamentally different from identity exploration introduced or reinforced by institutions. In the former case, adults respond; in the latter, restraint is required.

I do not support erasing LGBTQ people from education. I support ending saturation and restoring proportion.

Age-appropriate education should be:

- factual, not ideological
- optional where possible, not compulsory
- focused on respect and anti-bullying, not identity exploration
- delivered with parental knowledge and involvement

Children do not need to be taught every theory of identity to learn kindness. They need clear boundaries, stable language, and trusted adults.

There is a difference between:

“Some people are different — treat them with respect”

and

“Identity is something to actively question, explore, or declare.”

One teaches coexistence. The other invites confusion.

Schools should return to the first.

Fear for children's safety is not irrational — it is instinctive. The failure occurred not because parents asked questions, but because institutions responded to uncertainty with certainty, and to concern with dismissal.

Student Clubs, Extracurricular Gaps, and Unintended Ideological Capture

One underexamined factor in the escalation of culture-war conflict in schools is the structure of extracurricular life itself.

In Iowa, student clubs are typically student-run, peer-organized, and minimally supervised. For student athletes, schools already provide structured, adult-led pathways for recognition, mentorship, advancement, and belonging through sports. For non-athletes, however, the primary avenue for extracurricular participation is often student-led clubs.

This imbalance matters.

Adolescents are still forming identity, judgment, and long-term perspective. They naturally seek belonging, recognition, and purpose. When the primary non-athletic options available are peer-run clubs organized around ideology — whether political, cultural, or identity-based — those clubs can unintentionally become spaces where ideas circulate without adult guidance, historical context, or developmental restraint.

When identity formation is driven primarily by peer dynamics rather than adult-guided context, restraint disappears — not through malice, but through absence. This does not mean students are acting in bad faith. It means they are doing what adolescents have always done: seeking community, meaning, and validation — often through ideas they encounter online and bring into school environments faster than adults realize.

The conclusion is unavoidable: this structural gap created an unnoticed pathway for cultural escalation to take hold inside schools — not through curriculum or intent, but through peer amplification occurring faster than adult oversight.

Student clubs themselves are not the problem; the problem is asking adolescents to carry the weight of identity formation without sufficient adult structure, guidance, or alternatives.

The solution is not to eliminate student clubs or restrict association, which would provoke backlash and further polarization.

The solution is to expand options, not remove them.

Iowa should reinvest in adult-led, skills-based extracurricular programs that offer students meaningful alternatives to ideological organization. This includes paid opportunities for teachers, community professionals, tradespeople, artists, engineers, gardeners, mechanics, designers, and business leaders to lead hands-on programs outside the core curriculum.

These programs would emphasize:

- practical skill development,
- mentorship and mastery,
- creativity and individual expression,

- visible pathways for growth and recognition.

Much like the Pinewood Derby, the value lies not in ideological conformity, but in creation — making something your own, learning through doing, and developing confidence grounded in competence rather than identity performance. The joy of Pinewood Derby and art class is in the creative license: it lets kids think outside the box instead of merely as future employees. We need that. That is arguably the best part of our childhoods, and when parents removed it from schools, students found fun - and arguably less healthy - ways to replace it.

By broadening extracurricular offerings, schools reduce the pressure placed on clubs to function as identity incubators. Students gain outlets for belonging that are rooted in learning and collaboration rather than ideology, and adults return to their proper role as stewards of developmental environments.

This approach does not suppress expression. It dilutes escalation. It restores balance. And it allows healthy identity development to occur without being prematurely politicized.

When adolescents are given meaningful ways to build, learn, and be seen, ideology loses its gravitational pull — not through suppression, but through replacement.

Rebuilding Legal Protections with Guardrails

Now that we have lived through the consequences, it is time to restore legal protections in a way that prevents foreseeable harm — including **undue influence on children**.

If a child naturally and persistently shows signs of gender dysphoria **without social pressure or institutional reinforcement**, that is one thing and should be handled with care and compassion. But schools must be brought back to **institutional neutrality** — not affirming, not denying, not steering.

The reality is that this genie cannot be put entirely back in the bottle. But we can stop amplifying it.

One practical step is to rethink how schools structure extracurricular life.

Right now, non-athlete students often default into **student-led ideological clubs** — on both the left and the right — because there are too few **adult-led, skills-based alternatives**. That vacuum has turned schools into incubators for culture-war politics, rather than places where young people learn practical skills, trades, arts, sciences, and civic responsibility from experienced adults.

We should be expanding adult-led extracurriculars that teach real-world competence — not leaving adolescents to self-organize around identity and ideology.

VI. When Enforcement Fails, Escalation Fills the Vacuum

When people believe that lawful remedies are unavailable, ineffective, or indefinitely delayed, escalation becomes tempting. Courts feel distant. Lawyers do not step forward. Institutions close ranks. Obvious failures go unaddressed. In that vacuum, advocacy often shifts from enforcement to symbolism — not because people are irrational, but because they are desperate to be heard.

This pattern is not confined to any movement or moment; it recurs wherever enforcement collapses and spectacle rushes in to fill the gap. When formal accountability feels out of reach, people resort to spectacle, provocation, and moral confrontation — hoping that attention will accomplish what law has not.

I understand that frustration. I live inside it.

But provocation is not enforcement. And when escalation replaces repair, the consequences do not fall evenly. They fall hardest on those with the least insulation from backlash — particularly people whose lives, bodies, or safety are already politicized.

This section examines how that dynamic played out in Iowa — not to assign moral condemnation, but to explain why tactics that feel righteous in the moment can undermine the very civil-rights protections they seek to advance.

The examples that follow differ in style and ideology, but they share the same structural failure: symbolic confrontation stepping in where legal accountability felt unreachable.

The Satanic Temple: Symbolic Confrontation as a Stand-In for Enforcement

Clarifying Note on Religious Status and Intent

Nothing in this section is intended to adjudicate the sincerity of anyone's religious belief or to deny that The Satanic Temple may function as a religion for its adherents. Religious belief is inherently personal, and sincerity cannot be externally measured or legislated.

This analysis proceeds from a narrower and unavoidable reality: within Iowa's cultural context, many residents — myself included — have struggled to determine whether The Satanic Temple's actions are primarily expressions of faith or primarily symbolic political interventions. That uncertainty is not invented; it is widely expressed, reinforced by the organization's own public messaging, and was directly addressed in questions I posed to The Satanic Temple in my public statement responding to the controversy linked here.

The concern examined in this section is therefore not theological legitimacy, but **governance impact**: how institutions respond to highly provocative actions (regardless

of intent) when enforcement mechanisms feel inaccessible, and how those responses predictably affect public trust and downstream backlash.

Nothing in this discussion is intended to restrict lawful expression or religious exercise; it examines only the foreseeable governance consequences of provocation-based strategies in the absence of effective enforcement.

The Satanic Temple controversy is best understood not as a theological dispute, but as a case study in symbolic escalation replacing legal remedy. When advocacy shifts from enforcement to provocation, attention may follow — but trust erodes, and backlash hardens.

Civil-rights law is meant to remedy concrete harm through accountability — not to stage ideological confrontations or symbolic stress tests. When advocacy relies on provocation rather than repair, it weakens public confidence in the law itself and shifts the cost of backlash onto those with legitimate claims — people who depend on civil-rights protections to live and work safely in their communities.

This section addresses one specific context in which those concerns arose.

This document builds on a public statement I issued earlier responding to the Satanic Temple controversy. In the aftermath of that statement, I received a series of sincere and substantive questions from Iowans about faith, provocation, civil rights, and institutional responsibility. Those questions — reproduced in full at the end of this document — are the origin of the analysis that follows, and they merit a direct and respectful answer.

(Prior statement: <https://wildwillpower.org/sondra-wilson-reframes-satanic-temple-controversy/>)

Faith, provocation, and moral misrepresentation

The Satanic Temple describes its use of Satan as a symbol of resistance to unjust religious authority. For many Iowans — particularly Christians — that framing is not merely provocative, but confusing. In the Christian tradition, resistance to hypocrisy, cruelty, and abuse of power is embodied not by Satan, but by Jesus himself.

This is the source of much of the moral dissonance. The objection is not simply to offense, but to misrepresentation.

Jesus confronted unjust authority through truth, restraint, and love — not through mockery or spectacle. That distinction matters in public life. Provocation that presents itself as moral courage may generate attention, but it also fuels backlash and deepens misunderstanding, often harming vulnerable people long after the spectacle fades.

My position here is not theological, nor is it hostile to dissent or expression. It is grounded in stewardship. When civil-rights advocacy adopts tactics that predictably inflame rather than persuade, it does not advance protection. It transfers risk to those least insulated from its consequences.

My views do not come from deception, hostility toward faith, or alignment with any movement. They come from lived experience, long-term observation, and a commitment to governing responsibly in a state where people do not all share the same beliefs — and must still live together under the same laws.

Governance over Identity

I am not running for governor on identity politics — including religious identity, party loyalty, or ideological purity. I believe most Iowans are done with that, and not just on one side of the aisle.

Identity politics cuts in many directions. I am not interested in proving that I am the “right” kind of Christian, the most loyal partisan, the most ideologically pure conservative or liberal, or that I am qualified to govern because of my gender identity. None of that governs a state.

I am running on restoring fair governance — on depth, seriousness, and real policy work. Iowans are tired of political theater and exhausted by symbolic fights that never translate into better schools, safer communities, or more stable livelihoods. What people are asking for now is not louder rhetoric, but better answers.

Because I am a transgender woman, some will inevitably view everything I say through that lens. I understand that. But the questions raised here are not about symbolism or identity alignment. They are about real harm, real institutional failure, and the responsibility of leadership to choose restraint over escalation when the cost of error falls on others.

That is the standard I am applying throughout this document — and the standard I will apply in governance.

To understand why fear, provocation, and backlash recur so predictably — especially where faith is involved — we have to look deeper than modern politics, and reckon with the historical relationship between power, religion, and suppression.

Drag Story Hour and Cultural Escalation

Like the Satanic Temple controversy, Drag Story Hour illustrates how institutional escalation can outpace public trust — and how the resulting backlash disproportionately harms those least able to absorb it.

Drag Story Hour did not originate in Iowa. It emerged nationally and appeared in Iowa libraries beginning around 2018, after parental concern about children's exposure was already being voiced. Instead of slowing down to rebuild trust, some advocates escalated visibility through institutions.

Here is the reality no one wants to say out loud:

Drag performers can take off the costume at the end of an event and return to anonymity. Institutions can issue statements. National donors move on. Media cycles shift.

Transsexual adult women cannot remove visibility. We live with the consequences long after the event ends.

The political framing that followed increasingly associated transgender women — not drag performers, not organizers, not institutions — with children, sexuality, and perversion. I reject that framing completely. But it is undeniable that it took hold.

I want to be clear about something that often gets lost in these debates: I support drag performers as artists and as people. My critique is not about suppressing expression. It is about **strategy, stewardship, and care for those who bear the backlash.**

Much of the public disagreement here stems from a failure to distinguish **content from context.**

A film like *Mrs. Doubtfire* is typically parent-selected or parent-permitted, passively consumed, and viewed within a familiar, mediated setting. It does not involve direct interaction between children and unfamiliar adults, nor does it invite children into someone else's cultural space. Any moral lesson is embedded in narrative, not enacted through relationship or participation.

Drag Story Hour is different in kind — not because drag is inherently sexual or immoral, but because it is live, interactive, institution-mediated programming that invites children into an adult-led space and encourages engagement with unfamiliar adults through institutionally mediated trust, rather than parental discretion alone. In a society where children are routinely taught not to interact with strangers without parental guidance, this inversion of boundaries understandably alarms many parents.

This concern is not about censorship or dogmatic sheltering. It is about safeguarding. We live in a world where sexual predators do exist, and child-protection norms exist precisely to reduce opportunities for manipulation, grooming, and abuse. When institutions normalize trust and access without clear parental mediation, they blur lines that are meant to protect children — and they do so regardless of intent.

Clear boundaries protect children. They also protect the LGBTQ community from false and harmful associations that arise when adult expression and child-appropriate engagement are not carefully distinguished.

I would urge drag performers and organizers to listen to their fellow Iowans — especially parents and transgender adults — and to consider adult forums and venues where expression does not predictably trigger fear or political escalation. Doing so is not capitulation. It is respect. And in a state like Iowa, respect builds trust.

Ironically, choosing adult spaces may expand rather than shrink your audience. People are far more open to art and difference when they feel heard rather than cornered. Provocation draws attention. Respect builds allies.

This is why I have been critical of both Drag Story Hour and the Satanic Temple's provocative branding — not because I oppose expression, but because civil-rights advocacy must be trauma-aware and protective of those most vulnerable to backlash.

Provocation is easy when you are insulated.
It is devastating when you are not.

When institutions escalate without restraint, backlash does not fall evenly.
It falls downward.

The pattern described here is not primarily about faith, art, or expression. It is about what happens when enforcement fails and escalation fills the gap. Symbolic victories replace material protection. Provocation replaces repair. And the people who bear the consequences are rarely the ones who chose the tactics.

Civil-rights law exists precisely to prevent this dynamic — to resolve harm through accountability rather than spectacle. When those mechanisms are neglected, ignored, or treated as politically inconvenient, escalation becomes predictable.

The answer is not more provocation.

The answer is lawful enforcement — with remedies that reach the people who were harmed.

The sections that follow turn from diagnosis to remedy — examining how civil-rights protections can be restored in ways that protect adults, safeguard children, and reduce the incentive for symbolic escalation altogether.

VII. Institutional Failure and the Displacement of Harm

This section documents how media economics, donor incentives, and institutional risk-avoidance amplified extremes while silencing moderate voices. It shows why backlash did not land on decision-makers, but on ordinary people — and why accountability requires naming these incentive structures directly.

Media and Institutional Incentives That Reward Escalation

Any honest accounting must also acknowledge the role of modern media economics. In today's information environment, outrage is rewarded with visibility. Nuance is penalized. Algorithms amplify extremes not because they are accurate or humane, but because they drive engagement. Moderation, hesitation, and good-faith uncertainty disappear — not because reasonable people stopped existing, but because the system stopped amplifying them. As a result, the loudest and most polarizing voices come to define entire groups, while ordinary people watch their own positions misrepresented on all sides. This dynamic did not create the conflict, but it dramatically intensified it — and left many Iowans feeling voiceless in debates that claimed to speak for them.

Who Bore the Consequences

The law passed in 2007 was meant to protect transsexual adults like me. Instead, after years of escalation driven largely by institutional strategies that sidelined our voices, Iowa removed gender identity from its civil-rights protections altogether.

When backlash came, it did not land on national organizations or donor networks.

It landed on people.

Legal Protection Versus Institutional Prescription

When I say that institutions overreached, I am **not** arguing for a return to a world where people are left to fend for themselves. I am arguing for the opposite: **clear, durable legal protections that prevent foreseeable harm, paired with institutional restraint.**

No one should lose a job, housing, healthcare, or physical safety because they are transsexual, gender-nonconforming, or do not fit traditional expectations of sex or gender.

But protecting people from harm is **not** the same thing as turning evolving identity frameworks into institutional doctrine — especially in schools, and especially for children.

We can — and must — do both:

**protect people
and
restore neutrality.**

Returning authority to adults also returns responsibility. Parents, clinicians, educators, and administrators must be equipped not only to intervene when necessary, but to refrain when intervention would cause harm. Protection requires discernment: knowing when to act, when to wait, and when restraint better serves a child's future dignity than premature certainty.

Restraint must never become a pretext for prejudice. When sustained distress is evident, intervention must not be withheld due to ideology, stigma, or moral condemnation; caution and compassion are not opposing values, but complementary duties.

In short: institutions must not initiate, minors must not be burdened with adult decisions, and adults must respond — carefully, knowledgeably, and without dogma — when protection truly requires action.

Movement Escalation and the Displacement of Consequence — How Backlash Travels Downward

One of the least acknowledged consequences of escalation-first activism is how responsibility for backlash is displaced.

When institutions, organizers, or movement leaders adopt tactics that predictably provoke cultural or political opposition **without articulating clear, proportionate, and achievable demands**, the resulting harm rarely falls on those who authorized the strategy. It falls instead on the most visible and least protected people associated with the cause — often quietly, often privately, and often without institutional support.

This is not an abstract dynamic. It is a recurring pattern.

Protest and rallies are legitimate tools of democratic expression. But when activism becomes centered on provocation without proportional demands, or when escalation is treated as an end in itself rather than a means toward achievable outcomes, consequences follow. Those consequences do not distribute evenly. **They travel downward.**

In highly polarized movement environments, internal disagreement is easily reframed as betrayal. Strategic critique is treated as disloyalty. Civil engagement gives way to loyalty tests. Individuals who raise concerns about timing, audience, cultural context, or downstream harm are talked over, marginalized, or pressured into silence. Others remain quiet not because they agree,

but because they understand how swiftly dissent can be punished within tightly enforced group norms.

This dynamic does not produce strength. **It produces insulation for those with institutional power — and exposure for those without it.**

I do not describe this in terms of offense or hurt feelings. I describe it in terms of consequence. I have lived through both the physical violence that follows political escalation and the internal marginalization that follows raising concerns about its effects. When backlash is redistributed downward in this way, the most vulnerable are not being protected. **They are being used as shock absorbers.**

Beyond questions of leadership insulation, there is also a less discussed fiscal dimension to this dynamic.

Conviction without consequence feels righteous.

Consequence without power feels like punishment.

Leadership requires caring about both.

Institutional Insulation and Unequal Risk

There is an uncomfortable structural reality that often goes unspoken in these conversations.

In many cases, the individuals who authorize or publicly champion escalation-first strategies do so from positions of institutional stability. They hold salaried roles, professional titles, donor backing, and organizational insulation. Their livelihoods are not typically disrupted by the backlash that follows — even when that backlash is foreseeable. When controversy erupts, institutions issue statements, boards deliberate, funding cycles continue, and leadership remains materially secure.

This is not an accusation against any specific organization, nor a claim of bad faith; it is an observation about how lawful funding and incentive structures can produce unintended consequences.

There is also a broader fiscal dimension that deserves acknowledgment.

Across the political spectrum — and across states, causes, and ideologies — many advocacy models, including nonprofit structures that provide real and necessary services, operate under tax-deductible status. This structure is lawful and often appropriate. It enables public education, service delivery, and rights-based advocacy that would otherwise be impossible.

At the same time, it has systemic effects. Funds directed into advocacy infrastructures are, by design, not directed into public systems that provide direct, universal support. When budgets

tighten, protections erode, or enforcement fails, this can contribute to real-world scarcity at the bottom — even as advocacy activity, messaging, and leadership stability continue at the top.

This is not a claim of bad faith. It is a reminder that incentives matter. When decision-makers are structurally insulated from consequence, while the most vulnerable absorb the risk, movements can drift — unintentionally — away from protection and toward exposure. When escalation coincides with fiscal scarcity, the harm compounds quietly and often goes unreported.

Good intentions do not cancel unequal risk.

Leadership requires not only conviction, but accountability for who pays the price when strategies fail.

VIII. Women's Sports: Scapegoating Transgender Women Instead of Creating Workable Policy

This section examines how institutional decisions in sports and public culture created predictable backlash that fell hardest on women — including transgender women. It explains how slogans replaced evidence, how fairness concerns were mishandled, and how preventable failures became political flashpoints. This section examines how institutional decisions in sports and public culture created predictable backlash that fell hardest on women — including transgender women. It explains how slogans replaced evidence, how fairness concerns were mishandled, and how preventable failures became political flashpoints.

Women's Sports Policy Without Defamation

This section builds on the earlier 'Women's Sports Policy and Institutional Failure' analysis and focuses on enforceable, sport-specific rules.

We must protect women's sports. And we must do so without defaming transgender women.

These goals are not mutually exclusive.

The Lia Thomas case followed a familiar and preventable pattern: institutions adopted eligibility rules without doing adequate research, without sufficient consultation with endocrinologists or sports physiologists, and without listening to women athletes or transgender women who understood the medical realities of hormone therapy.

Allowing competition after only one year of HRT was not just premature — it was uninformed and irresponsible. Those of us who had done the research, or lived the medical reality, warned this would backfire.

The harm fell in two directions at once:

- women athletes competing in sex-classified sports were denied fair competition and told that raising legitimate concerns was bigotry;
- transgender women broadly became targets of ridicule, suspicion, and dehumanization when policy predictably failed.

Instead of women uniting across experience and evidence to demand responsible, science-based policy, the debate collapsed into slogans — “trans women are women” — which erased biology, silenced dissent, and miseducated well-meaning people. Institutions that made the decisions quietly stepped aside, while the backlash landed on individuals.

Women deserve fairness.

Transgender women deserve humanity.

Policy must be capable of holding both truths at once.

One option worth exploring — without slogans or mandates — is the development of open or mixed competitive categories in certain sports, alongside protected women’s divisions. An open league would allow participation based on ability and physiology rather than identity claims, while preserving women’s sports as a protected class rooted in sex-based competition.

This is not a demand, and it would not be appropriate for every sport. But refusing to even explore alternatives has left institutions choosing between unfairness and exclusion — a false binary that benefits no one. Serious policy should be capable of considering multiple competitive structures, guided by evidence, athlete safety, and competitive fairness rather than ideological pressure.

Once again, the greatest harm did not fall on policymakers or advocacy organizations. It fell on women — including transgender women.

Women’s Sports Policy and Institutional Failure

The Lia Thomas case followed the same pattern seen elsewhere: institutions made policy decisions without doing their research, without consulting clinicians who treat transgender adults, and without adequately weighing foreseeable harm.

Based on my own experience undergoing hormone replacement therapy, conversations with my doctors, and independent review of the medical literature, I believe the NCAA’s eligibility decision was not merely premature — it was irresponsible. Allowing transgender women to compete in women’s sports after only one year of HRT ignored well-documented physiological realities of muscle mass retention, skeletal leverage, lung capacity, and neuromuscular patterning that do not meaningfully normalize in that timeframe.¹⁰

For those of us who spoke up about this, we were ignored by a movement that too often viewed dissent as a betrayal of solidarity.

The consequences landed in two places at once:

- Women athletes competing in sex-classified sports were denied fair competition and told that raising legitimate concerns was bigotry.

¹⁰ Emma Hilton and Tommy R. Lundberg, “Transgender Women in the Female Category of Sport: Perspectives on Testosterone Suppression and Performance Advantage,” *Sports Medicine* 51, no. 2 (2021): 199–214; Joanna Harper et al., “How Does Hormone Transition in Transgender Women Change Body Composition, Muscle Strength and Hemoglobin?” *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 55, no. 11 (2021): 577–583.

- Transgender women broadly became targets of ridicule, suspicion, and dehumanization. We were easy to frame as “men pretending to be women” by sensationalized media and political opportunists.

Instead of all women uniting across experience and evidence to demand responsible, science-based policy, political donor networks and the echo chambers that followed them doubled down on either side of the political aisle: Riley Gaines, rightfully outraged, helped turn the masses against transgender women, while an uninformed, misled “trans movement” doubled down on the slogan “trans women are women”.

Highly amplified activist networks and well-funded advocacy organizations on either side had far more funding and amplification than the minority who experienced the backlash, as trans women continued to compete in sports while perhaps misinformed by a media campaign that validated their experience without appearing to have scrutinized the science.

Many female athletes felt erased. Transgender women were reframed as cheaters or threats. And the institutions that made the call quietly stepped aside while the backlash exploded.

Once again, the harm did not fall on policymakers or advocacy organizations. It fell on women — both cisgender and transgender.

IX. Law, Enforcement, and Color of Law

Why Rights Failed in Practice — and What Law Requires to Restore Them

This section is submitted not as rhetoric, but as a factual and legal accounting of how civil-rights protections for transgender Iowans failed in practice despite existing law and binding court rulings. It documents enforcement collapse, administrative retreat, and legislative circumvention, and explains why durable restoration requires not only statutory change, but accountability, restitution, and renewed enforcement under existing constitutional and federal civil-rights frameworks.

How Civil Rights Fail Without Repeal

Civil rights do not fail only when legislatures repeal them. They also fail when enforcement collapses, agencies retreat, and officials use the appearance of lawful authority to evade constitutional obligations. Legal scholarship has long distinguished between **statutory repeal** and **administrative non-enforcement** as separate mechanisms that can produce the same practical outcome: rights that exist on paper but not in life.¹¹

One failure is statutory repeal — the formal removal of legal protections through legislation. The other is administrative non-enforcement — when agencies decline to apply existing law, narrow its interpretation, delay compliance, or signal disinterest in enforcement. For those living under the consequences, the distinction matters less than the result. But for rebuilding protections that actually function, the distinction matters greatly.

In Iowa, the erosion of transgender civil rights occurred not only through what was written into law, but through how the law was interpreted, enforced, resisted, and ultimately abandoned. **Rights remained on paper long after they ceased to function in practice.**

Administrative Justice That Exists on Paper Only

One enforcement failure must be named plainly: the condition of the **Iowa Civil Rights Commission**.

Multiple investigative reports have documented that the Commission has closed a majority of discrimination complaints administratively — meaning they never proceed to full investigation

¹¹ Jerry L. Mashaw, *Bureaucratic Justice: Managing Social Security Disability Claims* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Cass R. Sunstein, “Law and Administration after Chevron,” *Columbia Law Review* 90, no. 8 (1990): 2071–2120.

or adjudication.¹² A detailed analysis published by the *Des Moines Register* found that **nearly 60 percent of workplace discrimination complaints were dismissed without investigation**, leaving complainants without factual review or remedy.¹³

At the same time, the Iowa House moved to reduce the Commission’s authority by converting it into an advisory body, further limiting its independence and investigatory capacity.¹⁴

For taxpayers, this creates the appearance that civil rights are being enforced.

For those filing complaints, it creates a different reality: **automated denial of justice**.

Civil-rights protections are only as strong as the institutions tasked with enforcing them. When agencies rely on procedural gatekeeping rather than substantive fact-finding, rights do not fail loudly — they fail quietly. Cases disappear. Harm goes unexamined. And the burden shifts back onto individuals least equipped to carry it.

For transgender Iowans — already navigating stigma, retaliation, and economic vulnerability — this meant that even when discrimination occurred, the path to relief was effectively closed. **The law remained on the books, but the door was locked.**

This is not merely an administrative problem. It is a constitutional one.

A civil-rights system that consistently filters out claims without scrutiny does not deter discrimination — it normalizes it. And when enforcement collapses at the agency level, statutory repeal becomes almost redundant. **Rights have already been rendered unenforceable in practice.**

Color of Law: When Authority Masks Illegality

American law has a term for what happens when government actors exceed constitutional authority while appearing to act lawfully: **acting under color of law**.

A color-of-law violation occurs when officials use the appearance of legal authority — statutes, administrative discretion, policy frameworks, or office — to deprive individuals of rights already secured by the Constitution or the courts. The action may look lawful on paper. **It is not lawful in substance.**

¹² “Iowa should stop tilting the scales in civil rights enforcement,” *Des Moines Register*, May 14, 2023.

¹³ “Why 60% of Iowa workers’ civil rights complaints aren’t investigated,” *Des Moines Register*, May 8, 2023.

¹⁴ Kathie Obradovich, “Iowa House votes to turn Iowa Civil Rights Commission into advisory panel,” *Iowa Capital Dispatch*, April 16, 2024.

This distinction matters because constitutional rights do not disappear when they become politically inconvenient.

In Iowa, the removal of gender-identity protections did not occur in a vacuum. It followed a series of court rulings recognizing gender-affirming care as medically necessary and subject to Medicaid coverage.¹⁵ Rather than comply, political actors responded through legislative override, administrative resistance, and prolonged non-enforcement.

The harm was not abstract. Coverage was blocked. Surgeries were canceled. Care was delayed or denied — often after courts had ruled such denials unlawful.¹⁶ These were not isolated incidents, but sustained periods of deprivation — what the law recognizes as **continuing injury**.

That injury is ongoing.

The Courts Iowa Chose to Override

Between 2018 and 2023, Iowa courts repeatedly ruled that denying Medicaid coverage for medically necessary gender-affirming surgery constituted unlawful discrimination.

In **Good v. Iowa Department of Human Services (2019)**, the Iowa Supreme Court held that Medicaid exclusions for gender-affirming surgery violated the Iowa Civil Rights Act.¹⁷

After the legislature attempted to reinstate a categorical exclusion, the policy was again struck down in **Vasquez v. Iowa Department of Human Services (2021–2023)**. The district court ruled the exclusion discriminatory, unconstitutional, and unlawful, with Judge William Kelly stating plainly that the ban could not stand under Iowa law.¹⁸

These rulings left the state with a lawful option: **comply**.

Instead, Iowa removed gender identity from the Iowa Civil Rights Act entirely, eliminating the legal framework on which enforcement depended.¹⁹ Coverage was terminated. Civil-rights protections disappeared. As reported by the *Associated Press*, this change coincided with the formal end of Medicaid coverage for gender-affirming surgery and hormone therapy.²⁰

¹⁵ Iowa Department of Human Services, Medicaid Coverage Bulletins (2019–2023).

¹⁶ *Good v. Iowa Department of Human Services*, Polk County District Court filings.

¹⁷ *Good v. Iowa Dep’t of Human Servs.*, 924 N.W.2d 853 (Iowa 2019).

¹⁸ *Vasquez v. Iowa Dep’t of Human Servs.*, No. CE 138271 (Iowa Dist. Ct. Polk Cnty. 2023).

¹⁹ Iowa Acts 2024–2025, amendment removing “gender identity” from Iowa Civil Rights Act.

²⁰ Iowa Acts 2024–2025, amendment removing “gender identity” from Iowa Civil Rights Act.

This was not reluctant adjustment.
It was **deliberate circumvention**.

Why Injunction-Only Justice Failed

The litigation that produced *Good* and *Vasquez* established something vital: **Iowa's conduct was unlawful**.

But it failed in another respect.

No damages were imposed. No restitution was ordered. The state bore no financial or institutional cost for years of unconstitutional conduct. When enjoined, lawmakers responded not by compliance, but by rewriting the law to legalize the harm.

Civil-rights litigation that produces injunctions without damages creates a perverse incentive structure. Attorneys may recover fees, but the state learns that it can violate rights, lose in court, and simply rewrite the law — without compensating the people it harmed.²¹

Civil rights without remedies are not rights in any meaningful sense.

Advocacy Without Enforcement: A Structural Deficiency

To date, the advocacy organizations that have spoken most prominently on behalf of transgender Iowans — including One Iowa and the ACLU of Iowa — have not publicly named the full scope of what occurred in Iowa for what it was: a coordinated withdrawal of civil-rights protections following adverse court rulings, resulting in the deprivation of medically necessary care under color of law.

Their efforts have helped many. Education, litigation support, and advocacy matter. But advocacy is not enforcement — and representation is not restitution.

This is not a question of intent.
It is a **structural deficiency**.

Organizations operating under 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) tax-advantaged status receive substantial public benefit — including tax-deductible donations and grant funding — in the name of protecting civil rights. When such organizations litigate civil-rights violations but do not pursue restitution for those directly harmed, they omit the most basic remedy the law provides.

²¹ See generally Mashaw, *Bureaucratic Justice*.

Under federal fee-shifting statutes such as 42 U.S.C. § 1988, prevailing civil-rights plaintiffs' counsel are routinely awarded attorneys' fees, often ranging from hundreds of thousands to several million dollars in cases involving statewide policy, extended litigation, and appellate review.²² These awards are lawful, expected, and well-established within civil-rights jurisprudence.

Meanwhile, the individuals whose rights were violated received no restitution, no continuity of care, and no material repair.

What the Harmed Actually Received — and What They Did Not

What the people most directly harmed received was not justice in the form the law recognizes as repair.

We received intermittent and unstable medical care.

We experienced repeated cancellations and prolonged denial of medically necessary treatment.

We endured years of public defamation by political actors.

We were harassed in public spaces, gossiped about at scale by people who knew nothing about our lives, and reduced to symbols rather than treated as patients or citizens.

What we did **not** receive was restitution.

We did not receive damages.

We did not receive continuity of medically necessary care.

We did not receive compensation or repair for prolonged, state-caused injury.

Unjust Enrichment and the Absence of Restitution

By contrast, across the advocacy and litigation ecosystem involved in these cases — including organizations such as the ACLU of Iowa and One Iowa — substantial public benefit flowed to institutions rather than to the individuals whose rights were violated.

That benefit included, across these organizations collectively, attorneys' fees awarded in civil-rights litigation, government and foundation grants, and significant tax-deductible donations raised in the name of transgender Iowans' rights.

These funds are lawful, expected, and publicly sanctioned. They are public resources, provided in the name of civil-rights enforcement.

²² 42 U.S.C. § 1988; see also publicly reported fee awards in statewide civil-rights litigation.

The individuals who absorbed the harm received no restitution, no continuity of care, and no material repair.

The imbalance is not rhetorical.

It is material.

The individuals whose rights were violated absorbed the injury.

The institutions absorbed the funding.

Restitution for those harmed was never pursued.

That is not justice delayed.

It is justice omitted.

Across the institutions acting in our name, public money moved.

Across the people harmed, it did not.

Good Intent Has Not Remedied Real Continuing Injuries

It is more than plausible that many leaders and good-faith employees within these organizations have never been asked to confront these dynamics directly. Many work diligently because they sincerely want to help people like me. They may have believed that restoring the law alone would be sufficient — and that those harmed would feel relief rather than unresolved injury.

But there is no institutional mechanism by which they could know the severity or duration of the harm endured by those left without restitution. Media coverage generates revenue. Political campaigns raise funds. Advocacy attracts donations. Across the political spectrum — for and against transgender people alike — money has flowed through institutions while the least protected have remained materially worse off.

Prudence demands the benefit of the doubt. Harm does not require malice. Unjust enrichment does not require intent. Outcomes remain outcomes.

To date, no color-of-law violation has been prosecuted. Institutions, campaigns, and parties have raised millions — likely far more — while those most directly harmed remain economically vulnerable, medically destabilized, and socially exposed.

That gap is not ideological. It is structural. And it is the gap this section names.

Insult Added to Injury

What makes this moment especially grave is that the withdrawal of protection did not occur in isolation. It was followed by additional burdens imposed on the very people whose legal standing had just been stripped away.

After civil-rights protections were removed, Iowa imposed Medicaid work requirements while political rhetoric simultaneously intensified. Transgender Iowans were told, in effect, to prove economic worth in workplaces where harassment and ridicule had been publicly legitimized — and where the state no longer stood as a neutral guarantor of protection.

This is not neutrality.

It is **compounding harm**.

“I Don’t Want to Pay for It” — What Actually Happened

A common refrain in debates over transgender healthcare is: *“I don’t oppose adults transitioning. I just don’t want to pay for it.”*

That framing obscures reality.

National survey data summarized by the **American Medical Association** show that approximately **25 percent** of transgender patients are denied hormone coverage, and **over 55 percent** are denied coverage for surgery — despite consensus among major medical associations that such care is medically necessary.²³

In Iowa, the state did not merely decline to expand coverage. After courts ruled that Medicaid exclusions were unlawful discrimination, **the legislature changed the law to avoid compliance.**²⁴

That is not fiscal neutrality.

It is **state-created exposure**.

Federal and Iowa Enforcement Pathways Already Exist

Relevant federal and Iowa statutes, case law, and legal doctrines referenced in this section are summarized in **Appendix C (Federal Authorities)** and **Appendix D (Iowa Authorities)** for readers who wish to examine the underlying law directly.

Much public debate assumes the law is insufficient. It is not.

Existing federal statutes — including **18 U.S.C. § 241** and **42 U.S.C. § 1985(3)** — already address coordinated, ongoing deprivations of rights carried out under color of law. These statutes exist precisely because injunction-only relief often fails to deter systemic abuse.

²³ American Medical Association, “Advancing Health Equity for Transgender People,” AMA Issue Brief (2023).

²⁴ American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, litigation summaries in *Vasquez* and related actions.

What is missing is not authority.

It is willingness.

A constitutional republic is measured not by how it treats the popular, but by how it restrains itself when targeting a minority is politically convenient.

That is the test Iowa now faces.

Closing Reflection

Near the top of the rotunda on the fourth floor of the Iowa State Capitol, emblazoned in gold lettering, are these words:

“The ideal state is that in which an injury done to the least of its citizens is an injury done to all.”

These words are not partisan. They are not aspirational rhetoric. They are a statement of civic duty.

This section does not ask Iowa to invent new law. It asks Iowa to remember its own— and to apply it evenly, even when doing so is uncomfortable, unpopular, or politically costly.

The question before the state is not whether these harms are real. They are documented. The question is whether the law still binds those with power when the injured are few.

When law is clear, injury is documented, and enforcement mechanisms exist, continued inaction is not neutrality. It is a choice.

This record establishes that Iowa possesses both the legal authority and the factual basis to act. What remains unresolved is not whether the law permits accountability, but whether those entrusted with power will exercise it — or continue to allow rights to exist only in name.

This Is Not Novel Law — It Is Unused Law

Nothing described in this section depends on new legal theories, expanded doctrines, or speculative interpretations. The statutory frameworks and judicial doctrines implicated here were enacted decades ago — in many cases, more than a century ago — precisely to address coordinated, institutional deprivations of rights carried out under the appearance of lawful authority.

Congress did not write these statutes for ordinary policy disagreements or good-faith administrative error. They were designed for moments when power consolidates, courts are defied or circumvented, and rights are stripped not accidentally, but collectively — through

legislation, enforcement retreat, and coordinated official action that leaves affected individuals without remedy.

The fact that these laws are rarely invoked against state-level political actors does not reflect legal weakness. It reflects political avoidance.²⁵

Federal civil-rights enforcement has increasingly relied on declaratory judgments and injunctions that announce what the law requires, while stopping short of imposing consequences for knowing, repeated violations. Over time, this has created a dangerous pattern: unlawful conduct is paused temporarily, then resumed in a different form, with no material cost to those responsible and no repair for those harmed.

Accountability, in this context, is not vengeance. It is deterrence.

Civil-rights law has always recognized that declarations without consequences invite repetition. Remedies exist not to punish ideology, but to prevent recurrence — to ensure that constitutional limits are real constraints rather than advisory opinions. When violations carry no cost, restraint becomes optional. When restraint becomes optional, rights become provisional.

This is why enforcement matters.

Restoring public trust does not require more statements, more acknowledgments, or more symbolic commitments. It requires demonstrating — clearly and credibly — that violations of constitutional rights produce consequences proportional to the harm caused. Not because officials are evil, but because power must be bounded to remain legitimate.

The failure to use existing law does not make these statutes obsolete. It makes them urgent.

A constitutional republic cannot function on declarations alone. Rights endure only when those entrusted with authority understand that compliance is not discretionary, circumvention is not consequence-free, and the least protected are not expendable when enforcement becomes inconvenient.

This section does not ask Iowa to invent new law.

It asks Iowa — and the institutions charged with enforcement — to use the law that already exists.

Turning Inward

²⁵ Historians have noted that the withdrawal of federal civil-rights enforcement following Reconstruction established a long-standing precedent in which rights remained formally recognized while enforcement was treated as negotiable.

When law fails, the cost does not fall evenly. It falls hardest on those whose safety depends on public trust — which is why responsibility must also be discussed within the community itself.

X. Responsibility, Maturity, and Public Trust Within the Trans Community

This section turns inward — not to assign blame, but to address responsibility where it is hardest to discuss and most necessary to model.

Civil rights do not survive on law alone. They endure only when communities practice the restraint, care, and maturity they ask society to extend to them.

If public trust has been damaged, restoring it requires more than institutional reform. It requires ethical leadership within communities — especially when others are vulnerable and the cost of error is not evenly shared.

Address to Younger Transgender Women

There is something I also need to say — and I need to say it directly to my own community.

If leadership means accounting for consequences, then responsibility cannot stop at institutions — it must also be modeled within communities.

Legal protection is not a blank check.

Dignity comes with responsibility.

And maturity is not optional when others are vulnerable.

To younger transgender women, especially those still in school:

You do not live in a vacuum.

Many girls and women carry trauma you cannot see — trauma they were never allowed to name, never allowed to process, and never allowed to outgrow. Sexual abuse is not rare. It is common. And it leaves deep, lifelong wounds.

Responsibility as the Foundation of Trust

This is also why I oppose compelled speech and performative activism. Respect cannot be coerced — it must be earned, modeled, and taught. And nothing undermines respect faster than acting as though boundaries themselves are an injustice.

Mainstream narratives about protecting women must include all women — including transgender women. Protecting women means protecting all women. There may be fairness questions to work through in specific contexts, but dignity should never be sacrificed for political expediency or retaliatory politics.

We can demand dignity **and** practice restraint.

Those are not opposing values.

They are the same value, expressed at different moments.

If we want society to take our safety seriously, we must take the safety of others just as seriously.

That is what maturity looks like.

That is what stewardship requires.

Standing with Our Sisters: Locker Rooms and Trauma Awareness

If you are old enough to pursue medical transition, you are old enough to understand this.

Transgender girls should not be placed in female locker rooms in high school settings by default *when trauma risks are foreseeable and reasonable accommodations are available*. That is not a judgment of your identity. It is a recognition of reality — and of responsibility. Many transgender girls already make these accommodations quietly and voluntarily, and they deserve recognition — not shame — for doing so.

This is not about punishment.

It is about **care**.

Look out for your sisters.

If that means changing in a separate space, do it — not because you were forced, but because you understand that consideration for others is part of adulthood.

Strength is not insisting on access.

Strength is choosing restraint when it protects someone else.

I am saying this because no one else will.

And because conservatives are right about one thing: if protections are restored, they must be paired with **self-regulation, moral seriousness, and internal accountability**.

We cannot demand trust while refusing responsibility.

Firmly — and with deep love and understanding — **I say this to lift you up, not to tear you down.**

This discussion applies to minors and school settings, is necessarily context-dependent, and does not justify the exclusion, withdrawal, or denial of medically necessary care for adults — whose treatment standards, constitutional protections, and reliance interests are addressed separately in Appendix B.

Why Law Requires Coherence (Gender Identity & Gender Expression)

One of the most damaging errors in recent years has been the insistence that gender identity alone — defined purely by self-declaration — is sufficient for civil-rights enforcement. That approach has not strengthened protections for transgender people. It has weakened them.

This is not because transgender lives are illegitimate. It is because **law operates in the shared world**, not the private mind. Civil-rights protections succeed only when they are **understandable, enforceable, and grounded in observable social reality**.

To restore durability and public trust, we must be clear about the distinction — and the relationship — between **gender identity** and **gender expression**.

Identity and Expression Are Distinct — but Law Cannot Separate Them

Gender identity refers to how a person understands themselves internally.

Gender expression refers to how that identity is communicated outwardly through appearance, behavior, and social role.

They are not the same thing.

But in public life — and especially in law — they cannot be treated as unrelated.

The state does not regulate inner experience. It regulates interactions between people. That means legal protection must be anchored in **what others can reasonably perceive and respond to over time**.

For most of human history, gender norms have functioned as shared social cues. They are imperfect. They evolve. But they are real. Expecting the public to abandon all reliance on gender expression is not pluralism — it is unworkable.

This is why gender expression matters.

When Identity and Expression Align, Protection Is Clear

A transgender woman who lives consistently as a woman — in name, presentation, and social role — is not making a theoretical claim. She is participating in a shared social reality. Repeated misgendering in that context is not confusion; it is harassment.

The same is true for nonbinary people whose expression is neither conventionally male nor female, or intentionally blends elements of both. Nonbinary gender expression has become a recognizable social category. When someone presents consistently outside traditional gender norms, they are providing clear social signals. Respecting those signals is not ideological submission — it is basic social competence.

In these cases, identity is not merely asserted. It is **lived**.
That makes it actionable.
That makes it protectable.

What This Is Not: “Passing” or Stereotyping

Let me be explicit.

Legal protection must **never** depend on beauty standards, stereotypes, or conformity to narrow ideas of masculinity or femininity. A person does not need to “pass” to deserve dignity or protection.

But expression does not mean conformity.
It means **coherence**.

A person can be:

- a masculine woman,
- a feminine man,
- an androgynous nonbinary person,
- or a transgender adult who does not pass by conventional standards,

and still maintain a consistent gender expression that others can reasonably recognize over time.

What does not work — legally or socially — is demanding that society treat identity as enforceable **while insisting that expression has no meaning at all**.

Where Breakdown Occurs (Abolitionism, Fluidity, Compulsion)

Problems arise when gender identity is treated as legally binding **without regard to gender expression**.

If a person presents fully and consistently as male — male clothing, grooming, voice, and social role — and insists that strangers must call them “she” under threat of legal sanction, the public does not read that as civil rights. It reads as coercion.

That perception matters — not because intent is irrelevant, but because civil-rights law does not operate in a vacuum. When legal standards lose cultural intelligibility, enforcement weakens, remedies stall, and frustration builds. As described in Section V, when enforcement feels inaccessible, escalation fills the vacuum — often through symbolic confrontation rather than repair.

This is how breakdown compounds: unintelligible standards erode trust, stalled enforcement invites spectacle, and spectacle triggers backlash that ultimately undermines the very protections civil-rights law exists to secure.

Put simply: when law loses coherence, backlash fills the gap — and the people most exposed are those whose safety depends on public trust.

Again, perception matters not because the public is always right — but because **law that loses cultural intelligibility does not survive**. Civil-rights law cannot require people to ignore every shared social cue unless there is a clear, consistent reason to do so. That reason is gender expression.

This distinction is not punitive. It is protective — especially for transgender adults whose lives absolutely depend on public trust.

Solidarity Without Coercion

And just as I have spoken directly to younger transgender women about choosing something noble — looking out for our sisters not through duress, but through understanding — I ask the same here.

You are absolutely free to build your life around relationships, workplaces, and friend circles that recognize you fully. You are free to come out publicly only to those with whom you feel safe. No one owes the public their inner life.

But for those of us who cannot choose when, where, or how we are recognized — whose visibility is not optional, whose safety depends on how we are read in shared space — I ask you to consider restraint as an act of solidarity.

Not because you are wrong.

Not because you must prove anything.

But because public trust is a shared resource, and some of us live or die by it.

This is not a demand for conformity. It is a request for care.

It is not submission to hostility. It is stewardship of one another.

Civil rights endure not only because they are asserted — but because they are protected, understood, and made survivable for those most exposed when trust collapses.

Nonbinary Identity Is Not the Problem — Abolitionism Is

Nonbinary people are not responsible for the backlash that occurred. Nonbinary expression — neither male nor female, or a blend of both — is real, legible, and protectable.

What caused backlash was something else: the claim that **gender itself must be abolished**, that norms are inherently illegitimate, and that everyone must be retrained to treat all gender cues as meaningless.

For many Iowans, that did not feel like respect. It felt like cultural erasure imposed from outside — without consent, conversation, or restraint.

That reaction was predictable.

When a movement denies the reality of long-standing social structures instead of reforming them, boundaries are not removed. They are rebuilt — often harshly — by those who feel overrun.

Gender Fluidity and the Limits of Mandate

There is another category that must be addressed honestly: gender fluidity — the experience of shifting gender expression over time, sometimes frequently, with pronouns that change accordingly.

This experience is real.

It is also rare.

That distinction matters.

Civil-rights law functions at scale. It requires categories stable enough to be recognized and applied consistently. Gender fluidity, by definition, resists that structure.

When a person's gender expression changes frequently and pronouns are expected to track those changes in real time, the burden placed on the public becomes unworkable. Not because people are malicious — but because systems are not designed for constant individualized recalibration.

Law cannot compel perfect attunement to fluctuating personal states without collapsing into arbitrariness.

Law cannot honor every identity without collapsing; that does not mean those identities lack dignity.

Nothing here excuses cruelty or mockery; the question is not moral obligation, but what the law can enforce without collapsing.

Education and Accommodation Are Appropriate — Compulsion Is Not

This does not mean gender-fluid people should be erased, mocked, or denied dignity.

It means the appropriate response is:

- education,
- voluntary accommodation,
- and clear communication within relationships, workplaces, and communities.

It does **not** mean:

- compelled speech,
- legal liability for honest mistakes,
- or treating inconsistency as evidence of malice.

Expecting strangers, coworkers, or public servants to flawlessly track shifting pronouns under threat of sanction is not reasonable governance. It is wishful thinking — and it places the greatest cost on the very transgender adults civil-rights law was meant to protect.

A Durable Standard for Protection

The standard I support is simple, fair, and workable:

- Gender identity matters.
- Gender expression matters.
- Legal protection requires reasonable consistency between the two in public life.

This standard:

- does not police bodies,
- does not demand conformity,
- does not erase anyone,

but it **does** preserve civil-rights law as a tool for preventing real harm — rather than turning it into a mechanism for compelled belief.

Stewardship, Not Betrayal

When communities refuse to draw reasonable boundaries themselves, unreasonable ones are eventually imposed from outside.

Civil rights endure only when they are:

- understandable,
- enforceable,

- and perceived as fair by the broader public.

Drawing limits is not betrayal.

It is stewardship.

And stewardship is how protection survives.

XI. Clarifying Boundaries: Law, Institutions, and Responsibility

This section clarifies what I am — and am not — arguing, particularly regarding nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people. It explains how overbroad policy responses created harm, and why dignity, restraint, and maturity are necessary conditions for durable civil protections.

Boundary-setting around children is not about singling out transgender people — it applies equally to all adults, all institutions, and all programming. This is an area where all sides should be able to unite: thoughtfully, consistently, and without cultural intrusion.

Gratitude for Advocacy and Lessons Learned

Before turning to solutions, I want to pause and say something that matters deeply to me.

I am genuinely grateful to the many LGBTQ+ community members, advocacy organizations, healthcare providers, educators, and allies who worked — often at personal risk — to increase acceptance and safety for people like me. Much of that work was done with real compassion, courage, and good faith. Without it, I would not have survived long enough to be writing this today.

Even where I now believe the movement took a harmful turn, I do not believe that turn was driven primarily by malice. In many places, it came from a sincere desire to protect vulnerable people and reduce suffering. That intention deserves acknowledgment and respect.

My critique is not a rejection of that care.
It is a plea to learn from what went wrong.

Problems Created by Overbroad Use of “Gender Identity”

One of the central issues we now face — with the benefit of hindsight — is that the term **“gender identity”** has become far too broad an umbrella.

When “gender identity” was added to the Iowa Civil Rights Act in 2007, it was understood in a much narrower sense than it is today. At that time, it referred primarily to **transsexual adults** — people with persistent gender dysphoria who pursued medical transition and needed protection from discrimination in housing, employment, healthcare, and public life.

Since then, the meaning of the term has expanded dramatically. It now encompasses a wide range of identities, expressions, philosophies, and social frameworks — many of which did not exist in public discourse at the time the law was written, and many of which are not medical in nature at all.

That expansion created confusion, conflict, and unintended harm.

It also made it far more difficult to craft policy that protects people **without creating foreseeable risks**, particularly to minors.

One reason protections collapsed is that the legal category of “gender identity” broadened so quickly that it lost clarity. In 2007, Iowa lawmakers were primarily concerned with protecting medically transitioning adults from discrimination in housing, employment, healthcare, and public life. By 2025, the same term had expanded to cover a wide range of identities and frameworks, not all of which faced the same systemic risks or required the same institutional response.

This ambiguity weakened enforcement, fueled backlash, and ultimately left the most vulnerable — adults undergoing or having undergone medical transition — exposed when protections were repealed. My proposal is not repeal, but refinement: civil-rights protections should be clear, targeted, and durable, prioritizing those at highest risk of material harm while remaining open to nonbinary and gender-nonconforming individuals who can demonstrate discrimination. Precision strengthens protection. Vagueness invites collapse.

Clarifying What I Am — and Am Not — Saying

I want to be very clear about something, because this matters.

I am **not** saying that nonbinary, gender-fluid, or gender-nonconforming people are a trend. Human variation in gender expression has existed across cultures and throughout history. Many people experience gender in ways that do not fit neatly into binary categories, and that reality deserves dignity and protection from harassment and discrimination.

What did become trend-driven was how institutions responded.

Over time, “gender identity” grew into an umbrella so broad that it stopped distinguishing between:

- adult medical conditions,
- social identity frameworks,
- personal self-expression,
- and evolving academic theories.

Institutions — schools, nonprofits, professional associations — began treating all of these as if they required the same kind of affirmation, instruction, and policy response, even when the contexts were radically different.

That is where harm entered.

This was **not caused by nonbinary people**.

It was caused by **institutional overreach** — by moving faster than evidence, faster than culture, and faster than dialogue.

Address to Nonbinary and Gender-Nonconforming Readers

I want to say this plainly to nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people reading this: you are not a problem to be solved. Many of you found language for yourselves only recently, and that language brought relief, not harm. My critique is not of your existence, your dignity, or your right to live free from harassment. It is of institutions that responded to new language with maximalist policy, rather than patience, proportionality, and consent-based governance. A movement that cannot distinguish between people and policy will ultimately fail the people it claims to protect.

XII. Rebuilding Trust

Where the prior section addressed ethical responsibility within the transgender community, this section addresses how institutions and law lost precision — and how that loss produced foreseeable harm, particularly for children.

This section explains why national scripts and virtue signaling failed in Iowa — and why lived experience, local voices, and plain language are essential to restoring legitimacy. It emphasizes empathy through recognition rather than instruction.

Rebuilding Trust Through Iowa-Based Voices

Iowans do not respond well to virtue signaling or imported scripts. We respond to **people we know, stories we recognize, and language that sounds like home.**

If we want understanding and empathy, we need fewer glossy national toolkits — and more Iowa voices:

- transsexual adults who work, pay taxes, and raise families here
- gender-nonconforming people talking about lived experience without slogans
- parents explaining what helped them understand — and what pushed them away
- teachers and counselors speaking plainly about what works and what doesn't

Empathy grows from recognition, not instruction.

This is not about silencing anyone.

It is about grounding public life in lived reality instead of donor-driven messaging.

“I believe in strong legal protections against harm, paired with institutional restraint that respects families, culture, and developmental boundaries.”

My lived experience informs my judgment, but it does not override my duty to govern fairly for people who disagree with me — including those who may never agree with me at all.

What a Measurement of Success Might Look Like

Success looks like fewer children politicized, fewer adults scapegoated, fewer institutions overreaching — and fewer decisions driven by sensationalism or escalation-based leadership. It looks like restoring room for steady, discerning leaders to rise: people who know where to look, who lift up those quietly struggling before desperation turns into spectacle, and who do the real work of governance rather than competing for attention, dominance, or permanence.

Recap

- I oppose irreversible medical intervention for minors except in rare, carefully evaluated cases with long-term follow-up and no institutional pressure toward any outcome.
- Parents must be informed and involved. Secrecy is not safety.
- Explicit sexual material does not belong in school libraries and should be clearly segregated in public libraries, no differently than Iowa once treated PG-13 and R-rated films.
- I support freedom of speech, but I am not a free-speech absolutist. Rights exist within the framework set forth in the Preamble — to promote the general welfare and provide for the common defense. While modern courts have interpreted the First Amendment more expansively, I believe that trend often departs from the Constitution’s original structure and purpose. James Madison and Thomas Jefferson understood liberty not as license, but as ordered freedom. Justice Joseph Story later affirmed this understanding when he wrote that “the preamble of the Constitution states the objects of the Constitution, and they are the true key to its interpretation.”
- We must stop treating exceptions as norms. Accommodation does not require linguistic or social micromanagement of everyone else’s life.
- It is morally wrong to misgender people. It is also wrong to compel speech or enforce performative activism. Respect must be taught, not mandated. In the words of Upton Sinclair, “It is better to educate than to alienate, and it is better to feed than to fight.”
- Parents should not punish children for being gay. Compassion matters. But schools must not replace parents.
- Trauma-aware policy must center abuse survivors. That includes recognizing that transgender girls in high school do not belong in female locker rooms, and that consideration for others is part of maturity.
- I support nondiscrimination protections that mitigate foreseeable harm.
- I oppose provocative programming that predictably endangers vulnerable people.
- Strong public schools are safeguards against tyranny — not instruments of it.

XIII. Restoring Public Trust: Faith, History, and Moral Restraint

Before policy can be rebuilt, something deeper must be repaired. Law alone cannot restore legitimacy where fear has taken root. Public trust depends on shared moral boundaries, historical memory, and restraint — especially from those who hold power.

To understand why backlash cycles recur, and why difference so easily becomes danger, we have to step back from modern politics and reckon with the moral and historical inheritance shaping this moment.

A Deeper Historical Reckoning: Suppression and the Myth of Sudden Increase

There is a deeper historical truth that must be named plainly if we are going to stop repeating the same cycle of fear, backlash, and misdirected blame.

The idea that there are “suddenly more” LGBTQ people is not evidence of social contagion or moral decay. It is evidence of relief from centuries of violent suppression.

Same-sex attraction, gender nonconformity, and transsexualism are not modern inventions. They appear consistently across human societies, time periods, and cultures — including throughout pre-Christian Europe. Germanic, Celtic, Greco-Roman, and Scandinavian societies recorded forms of same-sex relationships and gender variance, sometimes ritualized or socially contextualized, though not uniformly accepted. They did not use modern terminology, but the people themselves existed openly and recognizably.

What changed was not human nature.

What changed was power.

With the rise of imperial Christianity, religious doctrine fused with state authority. Deviations from orthodoxy were no longer treated as social variance — they were treated as existential threats. Across centuries, Europeans were imprisoned, tortured, exiled, or executed for violating religiously enforced norms around sex, gender, and belief.

That violence did not eliminate LGBTQ people.

It taught them to hide.

It taught people to marry against their nature to survive.

It taught parents to suppress or punish their children’s differences.

It taught communities to equate difference with danger.

When modern societies loosened those constraints, what followed was not the creation of something new — it was the reappearance of something old.

Trends rise and fall.

Human variation does not.

A Necessary Moral Boundary: Difference Is Not Abuse

This historical truth must be stated alongside an equally clear moral boundary.

LGBTQ people are not — and never have been — synonymous with pedophilia, bestiality, or sexual exploitation.

Those practices are immoral because they violate consent, exploit power imbalances, and cause harm. They were condemned not only by Christianity, but by secular law, classical philosophy, and virtually every ethical framework humanity has produced.

Same-sex attraction and gender variance concern identity, embodiment, and relationship among consenting individuals. Conflating them with abuse is false, defamatory, and historically dangerous.

That conflation has been used repeatedly as a tool of persecution — not to protect children, but to justify violence against people who posed no harm to others.

Rejecting that lie is not progressive ideology.

It is moral clarity.

Law, Mercy, and Civil Order: A Christian Case for Restraint

Christians, in particular, should recognize the danger of this pattern — because Scripture itself warns against it.

In the Gospel of John, religious authorities bring an adulterous woman before Jesus, armed with Scripture and law, prepared to stone her. Jesus does not deny the law — but he refuses to allow it to be wielded without restraint, self-examination, and mercy.

“Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.”

That moment matters far beyond theology.

It represents one of the *influential* moral narratives that later informed Western concepts of restrained civil law — law that restrains vengeance, limits power, and protects the vulnerable from righteous mobs. Our modern legal system exists because Western society slowly learned that punishment must be governed by evidence, proportionality, and restraint — not fear, disgust, or religious zeal.

Civil rights, properly understood, are civilian rights: the guardrails that prevent society from turning moral panic into legalized cruelty.

This does not mean boundaries disappear.
It does not mean all behavior is moral.
And it does not mean society must affirm everything.

It means that law exists to preserve order, protect the innocent, and restrain excess — especially when fear runs high.

That is not liberalism.
That is Christian responsibility.
And it is conservative duty.

With this context established, the sections that follow examine science, medicine, youth policy, civil-rights enforcement, and institutional responsibility — with precision rather than slogans.

What Restoring Protections Would Require

Rebuilding durable protections does not require returning to the mistakes that triggered backlash. It requires clarity, limits, and restraint.

A workable restoration framework would include: nondiscrimination protections focused on adults, particularly in employment, housing, healthcare, and public safety; clear age thresholds for medical decision-making, with heightened scrutiny and parental involvement for minors; sports policies grounded in sport-specific physiology and competitive fairness rather than slogans; and school frameworks that prioritize parental knowledge, consent, and institutional neutrality over affirmation or denial.

This is not exclusion. It is governance.

Protection functions best when it is paired with boundaries that are understandable, enforceable, and trusted by the broader public.

I address these questions more fully in *Reclaiming Iowa: The Path Forward*, where I outline a comprehensive approach to restoring civil protections while maintaining institutional restraint.

XIV. Conclusion

This section summarizes the path forward: restoring protections with guardrails, rejecting ideological extremes, and recommitting to restraint under the rule of law. It closes with a direct appeal to conservative leadership rooted in stewardship rather than spectacle.

Path Forward

If Iowa is to rebuild durable protections for LGBTQ people, it cannot be done through movements, absolutes, or donor-driven narratives.

It must be done through **stewardship**.

That requires conservative leadership — but not MAGA extremism. We need **Dwight Eisenhower conservatives**: restraint, dignity, and protection of minorities under the rule of law.

Pluralist and nonbinary Iowans belong at the table — **with responsibility to those most affected by backlash**.

Not everything that is true for some people belongs in foundational curriculum.

That is not exclusion.

That is governance.

Address to Traditional Conservatives and Republicans

Before I close, I want to speak directly to a group of people who rarely get spoken *to* anymore — only spoken *about*.

The quiet Republicans.

The stoic conservatives.

The ones who did not sign up for culture-war entrepreneurship, outrage branding, or performative cruelty.

The Republicans who still believe in “*speak softly and carry a big stick*.”

The Republicans who remember Dwight D. Eisenhower — a general who understood restraint, who believed that law mattered, who sent federal troops to escort the Little Rock Nine into Central High School because **civil rights were not optional when the Constitution was on the line**.

The Republicans who remember that this was once **Lincoln’s party** — a party that stood up for the defenseless when it was unpopular, costly, and politically dangerous.

I know many of you are still here.

I know many of you are tired.

And I know many of you have been drowned out — not by liberals, but by a loud minority within your own party that has mistaken domination for leadership.

It may not be popular right now to speak up for transgender people.

But I am **not asking you to do it on the movement's terms.**

I am not asking you to adopt slogans, deny biology, or surrender your values.

I am asking you to do something far more conservative than that.

I am asking you to stand for dignity under the rule of law.

For restraint over spectacle.

For protection without ideology.

For justice without cruelty.

This is your moment.

Not to shout.

Not to posture.

But to lead.

The world needs you.

America needs you.

Iowa needs you.

Let the party make room again for the voice that has been missing —
the voice of reason,
the voice of moral courage,
the voice that is not afraid to say:

“This has gone too far — and we can do better.”

That is the Republican Party Iowa desperately needs.

That is the Republican Party this nation desperately needs.

The Parable of the Collapsing Bridge

There was a small town with an old wooden bridge.

It wasn't perfect, but it worked. People knew its limits and crossed it carefully — farmers, children, neighbors, everyone.

One year, part of the bridge weakened. People were right to worry, especially about kids.

One group said, “Tear it down. It’s too dangerous.”

Another said, “It’s fine. Anyone who hesitates is afraid of change.”

Both shouted, but neither listened to the people who used the bridge every day.

The bridge wasn’t repaired carefully — or closed responsibly. Instead, rules changed constantly. Hesitation was punished. Caution was mocked.

Then the bridge failed.

And the people who fell were not the loudest voices in town — but the quiet ones the bridge was built for.

Only then did the town understand:

A bridge exists to help people cross safely — not to prove a point.

They rebuilt it with restraint.

They reinforced it where adults crossed.

They added guardrails where children walked.

They stopped turning it into a battleground.

The bridge was never perfect again — but it became trustworthy.

And the town learned this:

When stewardship is replaced by ideology,
the people who pay the price
are never the ones shouting the loudest.

XV. Heal the Heartland — Heal the World

Iowa can still model restraint without erasure, protection without ideology, and dignity without coercion — and in doing so, show the country that repair is still possible.

Iowa has solved harder problems than this before — not through imported ideology, but through community, restraint, and courage.

Something different must happen now.

And it requires all of us — left, right, and in between — to slow down, listen again, and lead with restraint.

United we stand. Divided we fall.

Sincerely,

Sondra Wilson

To provide good-faith, constructive feedback, please email

SondraWilson4Governor@gmail.com

www.WildWillpower.org

For readers who want to see how these principles apply in direct dialogue, the following questions were posed to me by an Iowa voter and answered in full.

Appendix A — Questions from an Iowa Voter

Now I would like us to return directly to a set of questions that prompted me to release this statement. Following my public statement regarding the Satanic Temple display at the state capitol (<https://wildwillpower.org/sondra-wilson-reframes-satanic-temple-controversy/>), a reader contacted me with the following set of questions. Although much of the responses were addressed throughout this document, this Q & A still serves as a useful dialogue, and I appreciate their giving me the opportunity to respond.

1. What is my stance on the transitioning of children?

In Iowa policy, I oppose puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgical interventions for children under the age of sixteen.

At sixteen and older, medical intervention should be considered only when a young person has demonstrated long-standing, consistent, and naturally expressed gender variance over time — without institutional initiation, social pressure, or premature medical framing.

This is not denial of care. It is recognition that effective adult medical options exist, while early intervention permanently narrows future choices. When lifelong consequences are on the table, time is not the enemy — it is protection.

Lifelong medical dependency is a serious, permanent decision, and in public policy we do not treat a minor's consent — on its own — as sufficient authorization for irreversible, life-altering interventions.

This is not a clinical judgment I claim to make as a physician; it is a public-policy judgment about consent, irreversibility, and the state's duty of restraint when evidence is incomplete.

We live in an era where adults have access to highly advanced medical technologies that can support transition later in life with far greater certainty, autonomy, and informed choice. If a young person is capable of understanding that reality, then they are also capable of waiting a few more years. Care should be responsive to a child's natural expressions — not initiated, accelerated, or directed by institutions. We observe and intervene when appropriate, dogmatic in neither direction, erring toward caution and guided by compassion.

Parents must be informed and involved, but involvement must never become coercion. As a culture, we must heal our relationship with healthy, consensual, informed forms of human and sexual development. Children are not extensions of their parents' fears, ideologies, or unresolved

wounds — nor should they be subjected to guilt-based dogma or conversion practices. Love does not require control.

There is a passage by Kahlil Gibran that captures this responsibility with unusual clarity — not as doctrine, but as a reminder of humility and stewardship:

*“Your children are not your children...
They come through you but not from you...
You are the bows from which your children
As living arrows are sent forth
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite
And he bends you with his might
That his arrows may go swift and far
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness
For even as he loves the arrow that flies
So he loves also the bow that is stable.”*

This is not a rejection of parental authority. It is a warning against possession — and against the urge to shape children into reflections of adult certainty. The role of adults is to steady the bow, not dictate the flight.

Institutions must not initiate identity exploration or medical pathways. Adults have a responsibility to be attentive and responsive to children, including awareness that gender variance exists. But there is a critical distinction between **recognition and initiation**. Schools and institutions should not present children with predefined identity menus or encourage premature self-labeling. Awareness is appropriate; direction is not.

Healthy development depends on adult-guided structure. Robust, adult-led extracurricular activities — artistic, civic, academic, and service-oriented — give young people belonging, expression, and purpose without organizing their social lives around identity categories. When identity-based, student-led groups operate without informed adult oversight, misinformation can be reinforced and normal developmental uncertainty can be prematurely solidified.

The same principle applies to information access. Just as PG-13 and R-rated films were historically separated from children's sections, sexually explicit or adult identity content should not be placed in elementary or middle school libraries and should be clearly segregated in public libraries. This is not censorship or banning — it is age-appropriate stewardship.

Restraint is not denial. It is protection.

*See: **Science, Medicine, and Uncertainty; Children, Medicine, and Institutional Escalation; Education and Youth Policy.***

2. How should Iowa protect children — especially those who have survived sexual abuse or live with PTSD — in schools, libraries, and public spaces?

These children must be centered, not sidelined.

Policy should be trauma-aware, age-appropriate, and cautious about exposure to sexually explicit or identity-saturating material. Explicit sexual content does not belong in school libraries and should be clearly segregated in public libraries, no differently than Iowa once treated PG-13 and R-rated films.

Survivors often remain silent. Governance must account for those who cannot advocate loudly for themselves.

Protection is not only about what children are exposed to, but about how, by whom, and under what institutional authority that exposure occurs.

See: Education and Youth Policy; Responsibility and Maturity as Conditions for Protection.

3. Are abuse survivors being adequately represented in current debates?

No.

In recent years, their needs have too often been subordinated to ideological battles and institutional certainty. Trauma-informed policy requires listening to the quiet, not just amplifying the loud.

Protecting vulnerable children is not a side issue. It is a moral baseline.

See: Responsibility and Maturity as Conditions for Protection; Education Policy: Exposure, Saturation, and Neutrality.

4. What is my position on bathroom and changing-space use?

Privacy, safety, and dignity must be upheld for everyone — especially minors.

In school settings, transgender girls should not be placed in female locker rooms by default when foreseeable trauma risks exist and reasonable alternatives are available. Many already make these accommodations voluntarily, and they deserve respect for doing so.

This is not punishment or denial of identity. It is maturity, care, and shared responsibility.

I also want to be clear about how leadership should operate in this space. For too long, young transgender Iowans have lacked visible public examples of adult restraint, responsibility, and care for others — especially around shared spaces.

But the role of an elected official is not personal intervention. It is to set clear standards, model maturity, and ensure that parents, educators, and institutions have the guidance they need to protect everyone’s dignity and safety. My responsibility is to govern — to provide policy clarity and cultural steadiness — not to bypass families or insert politics into private relationships.

See: Responsibility and Maturity as Conditions for Protection.

5. How do I view the Satanic Temple’s involvement in political activism and its alignment with LGBTQ causes?

I do not believe LGBTQ people as a group are responsible for the Satanic Temple’s actions, nor do I believe there is a coordinated or conspiratorial agenda.

However, I do believe the Satanic Temple’s provocative branding and tactics — particularly when introduced into child-accessible or public institutional spaces — appear designed to provoke escalation, coming across (based on cultural norms) as deeply counterproductive. That style of provocation often draws its appeal from youth rebellion culture: the gravitas of counterculture, shock, and transgression for its own sake. Historically, this pattern has appeared across many movements — where protest becomes an identity, criticism replaces construction, and opposition is treated as a virtue rather than a tool.

Rebellion without responsibility may feel empowering in the short term, especially for young people searching for meaning and belonging, but it rarely produces durable progress. When civil-rights causes become associated primarily with spectacle or offense — protest without proposal — the predictable result is backlash, and the harm falls most heavily on those with the least power to absorb it.

Peaceful protest and public dissent are essential to democracy—but they are tools, not substitutes for governance. As Buckminster Fuller once observed, “*You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.*” That insight remains relevant here. Civil-rights progress is secured not through shock or defiance alone, but through building institutions, norms, and protections that actually work — and that can be sustained.

Provocation is a poor substitute for stewardship.

See: Faith, Provocation, and Moral Misrepresentation; Power, Media, and Accountability.

6. Do drag performances and similar programming cross a line when they involve children or public institutions?

Adult expression belongs in adult spaces. Public institutions, especially those serving children, should not host programming that predictably triggers fear, religious offense, or interpretations that blur adult–child boundaries.

As a society, we have become too quick to escalate cultural disagreements to institutional enforcement rather than exercising judgment and restraint ourselves. Stewardship does not begin with regulation — it begins with conscience.

Just as I have asked the Satanic Temple to consider whether provocation serves the public good, I would ask performers and organizers to consider alternative venues and audiences where adult culture is welcomed, understood, and supported — without placing children or public institutions at the center of the conflict. There are many spaces where adult expression can thrive without creating unnecessary harm or division.

This is not censorship. It is stewardship — and it reflects a belief that adults are capable of choosing responsibility without being compelled by the state.

*See: **Drag Story Hour and Cultural Escalation.***

7. Does sustained silence from LGBTQ organizations amount to complicity when provocation occurs?

Leadership carries responsibility — especially in moments when movements become institutionally reinforced and internal dissent is costly.

Many LGBTQ organizations and advocates have actively supported controversial tactics. Others disagree privately but remain quiet, not out of indifference, but because dissent within a highly polarized movement is often reframed as betrayal of solidarity rather than civil engagement.

That dynamic is not unique to the LGBTQ movement. It mirrors what we have seen in MAGA politics, where deviation from group consensus is punished and restraint is mistaken for weakness.

Movements that cannot tolerate internal disagreement eventually lose public trust. Drawing boundaries is not capitulation — it is leadership. Refusing to do so does not protect dignity; it erodes it.

*See: **Power, Media, and Accountability; Rebuilding Trust.***

8. Why aren't disputed theories about transgender typologies or motivations more openly examined?

The honest answer is that we do not yet know enough — and too often, people on all sides behave as though uncertainty itself is a threat.

In recent years, complex and unsettled questions have been flattened into slogans and absolutes. Some treat evolving theories as settled fact. Others diagnose entire groups from afar — asserting, without nuance or evidence, that *all* transgender people fit a single psychological explanation or motivation.

That kind of broad-brush labeling is not serious inquiry. It is sloppy defamation — and it creates self-reinforcing echo chambers where people are judged, mischaracterized, and effectively “diagnosed” in the court of public opinion. The result is real-world harm to individuals who no longer get to be seen as themselves, but only as symbols in someone else’s argument.

Public policy must be grounded in evidence, humility, and openness to scrutiny — not certainty theater. Disputed claims should be examined responsibly, without taboo or intimidation, but also without denial, reductionism, or caricature. A society that cannot tolerate nuance eventually loses its ability to tell the difference between inquiry and accusation.

See: Science, Medicine, and Uncertainty.

9. Have I examined the role of trauma, including in my own life?

Yes.

Trauma is statistically overrepresented among transgender populations, but correlation is not causation. Trauma does not invalidate identity, nor does identity explain trauma. Broad claims that reduce transgender lives to a single origin story — particularly those centered on childhood abuse — are not supported by evidence and amount to mischaracterization rather than inquiry.

My own experience reinforces the need for care and precision. The trauma I live with did not precede my transition; it followed it. It arose from violence, harassment, and prolonged material instability — conditions shaped not by identity itself, but by how transgender people have been portrayed, politicized, and targeted in recent years.

When public figures and media ecosystems rely on shock, exaggeration, and dehumanizing narratives, those messages do not remain abstract. They shape social behavior. They embolden mistreatment. And they create environments in which harm becomes more likely — and accountability less certain.

That reality is part of why I approach these issues with restraint. Unresolved pain — whether personal or political — should never be exploited by ideology or accelerated into irreversible decisions, especially where children are concerned. Protection requires honesty about causes, humility about uncertainty, and responsibility for the consequences of our words.

See: Responsibility and Maturity as Conditions for Protection.

10. Do I believe in compelled speech, including mandatory pronoun usage?

No.

It is morally right to treat people with respect — to treat others as you would want to be treated. In Iowa, this isn't a radical idea. Many of us learned it early — often from a parent or a grandparent — long before politics entered the picture. Somewhere along the way, that guiding principle drifted out of our political culture, even as it became more urgently needed.

But respect loses its meaning when it is compelled, scripted, or enforced through institutional pressure. Speech should be guided by conscience, not coercion. Respect must be taught, modeled, and freely chosen — not mandated or reduced to performative compliance. When institutions compel speech, they undermine both liberty and the sincerity that genuine respect requires.

See: Summary of Positions; Governance Over Identity.

11. Can I set aside my personal experience to govern fairly for all Iowans?

Yes — and I must.

My lived experience informs my judgment, but it does not override my duty to govern impartially, uphold the Constitution, and protect the rights of all Iowans — including those who strongly disagree with me. No one is owed ideological conformity from their governor.

This campaign is not centered on any single identity or cultural issue. It is built around a comprehensive governing platform focused on healthcare, education, justice reform, workforce restoration, and long-term economic stability. Some elements of that platform are already public, and others will be released in full as the campaign continues — not as slogans, but as detailed, accountable proposals.

We are still early in this election cycle. As debates occur and plans are examined side by side, I believe Iowans will ultimately judge candidates not by labels or early endorsements, but by the seriousness of their ideas and the work behind them. Iowa has a long tradition of independent judgment, and I trust voters to exercise it.

My responsibility is not to demand belief, loyalty, or enthusiasm. It is to present a credible, humane, and practical vision for governing — and to let Iowans decide.

See: Governance Over Identity; Rebuilding Trust Through Iowa-Based Voices.

12. What is my philosophy on education, parental rights, and government power?

Parents are primary. The state is secondary — but the state is not absent.

We do not need parents to withdraw from public education. We need them to **re-engage** and help rebuild what was once a model education system for the nation. Schools work best when families, educators, and communities are aligned — not when they are siloed or pitted against one another.

Schools should educate, not indoctrinate. Government should protect against harm, not replace families or impose ideology. Expanding state authority without restraint invites abuse, but abandoning public institutions invites decline. Strong public education remains one of the most effective safeguards against tyranny — when it is **neutral, accountable, and bounded**.

My campaign is not about shrinking government for its own sake. It is about **restoring competence, clarity, and purpose** to public institutions so they serve families and prepare students for real life. My full education plan, to be released soon, is a call to re-engage, to rebuild, and to remove left-right ideology from the classroom in favor of programs that are adult-led, practical, and measurable.

As an example: one responsibility of the Civilian Restoration Corps will be installing highly productive, low-maintenance gardens on school grounds across Iowa as part of a statewide gardening class. Students will learn practical skills from the ground up — working with the land, producing food, and seeing the tangible results of their effort. The produce can help offset school lunch costs while reinforcing the dignity and rewards of useful work.

Another example is partnering with veterans and active-duty service members to teach firearm safety and responsibility — not to glorify weapons, but to teach respect, restraint, and the principle that rights come with obligations. Young people should learn context, safety, and responsibility from those who have borne that responsibility themselves — before they learn about firearms through movies or video games. This approach also honors veterans and helps rebuild trust between citizens and public servants.

Additional programs — such as teaching American Sign Language in schools — reflect the same philosophy: practical skills, civic inclusion, and adult-guided learning that prepares students for participation in a diverse society.

These ideas are not left or right. They are **Iowa-grounded**, adult-led, and focused on outcomes. They are about giving families and communities reasons to believe in public institutions again — and reasons to participate in making them better.

That is not ideology.

That is reconstruction.

See: Education and Youth Policy; Rebuilding Legal Protections With Guardrails; Civilian Restoration Corps Overview.

Closing Note

Some of the ideas referenced here draw from other parts of my broader platform, which will be released publicly in full in the coming weeks. This document is not meant to stand alone as a campaign platform, but to serve as a clear record of how I approach difficult issues: with care, restraint, and a commitment to governing rather than posturing.

I hope it has demonstrated the scope and character with which I intend to govern — and the seriousness with which I approach the responsibility of leadership. I do not believe Iowa needs to abandon its past, nor freeze itself in it. Our history was not perfect, but it contained real strengths: a culture of consideration, responsibility, practical problem-solving, and shared investment in the common good.

Those things do not survive automatically. They are passed down — or they are lost. If we fail to carry forward what was good while letting go of what no longer serves us, we risk becoming less grounded, less connected, and less capable of meeting what comes next.

I am running to help Iowa do this work together — not by returning to an imagined past, but by preserving what was right, repairing what was broken, and building forward with clarity and purpose.

Iowa deserves leadership willing to answer hard questions directly — without cruelty, without slogans, and without surrendering restraint.

That is the responsibility I am prepared to carry — fully.

Appendix B — Adult Medical Care and Why Waiting Matters

Content Notice and Disclaimer

This appendix discusses adult medical procedures and is intended solely for readers aged 18 and older. It is provided for informational and policy-context purposes only and does not constitute medical advice.

This material is not intended to promote, encourage, normalize, or advertise medical intervention for minors. Its inclusion reflects a clear policy distinction: adult autonomy and informed consent are fundamentally different from childhood development. The availability of effective adult care supports restraint — not acceleration — in youth medical decision-making.

Image Attribution and Safety Notice

The images on the following page depict adult surgical outcomes for a procedure called facial feminization surgery (FFS). These images are included solely to demonstrate that effective adult medical interventions exist.

Identifying information — including patient names, surgeons, clinics, and locations — has been intentionally omitted to protect the safety and privacy of medical professionals and patients in an environment of escalating political hostility and credible threats.

These images are representative examples drawn from publicly available educational and clinical materials. Their inclusion does not imply endorsement of any individual provider, nor are they presented as medical advice.

Figure A1–A3: Facial Feminization Surgery (FFS) — Adult Outcomes



One reason public debate has become distorted is that many people are unaware of how advanced adult transgender healthcare has become.

For transgender women experiencing persistent gender dysphoria, certain adult medical interventions — including hormone therapy and facial feminization surgery (FFS) — can significantly reduce daily distress, misgendering, and exposure to harassment. These procedures are often mislabeled as “cosmetic,” despite addressing features that routinely provoke social conflict and safety risks.

For many adults, access to this care improves mental health, employability, and quality of life — not by enforcing conformity, but by alleviating a chronic source of external friction that resilience alone cannot resolve.

This matters for youth policy. It also matters for adult liberty and public ethics.

When science advances to the point where suffering can be meaningfully reduced, suppressing that knowledge or access to care in order to prove a political point is not neutrality — it is intervention by denial. Withholding relief does not preserve tradition; it instrumentalizes human pain in service of ideology. This critique concerns systemic outcomes, not individual intent; many policymakers act from sincere belief, even when the resulting harm is real.

Iowa’s constitutional tradition, like the federal one, is grounded in the promotion of the general welfare and the protection of human flourishing. The right to pursue happiness does not require the state to compel belief — but it does require the state not to obstruct lawful, evidence-based care for adults seeking to live functional, dignified lives.

This principle is older than modern politics. It appears in constitutional law, in medical ethics, and in the moral traditions many Iowans hold dear. As Scripture reminds us:

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

Mercy, in public life, is not sentimentality. It is restraint in the use of power — especially when science offers relief and ideology demands suffering.

The existence of effective adult care undercuts the claim that irreversible medical decisions must occur in early adolescence to prevent lifelong harm. In many cases, time preserves options: physical development allows for better outcomes, informed consent becomes possible, and irreversible regret is avoided.

This appendix is not an argument that transgender people must “pass,” nor that gender nonconformity is illegitimate. It is an argument that relief exists later — and that children deserve to know that waiting does not foreclose dignity, safety, or happiness.

When adults intervene prematurely, they risk narrowing futures.

When adults wait responsibly, they protect them.

Appendix C — Relevant Federal Civil-Rights Statutes, Case Holdings, and Legal Frameworks

This appendix is provided as a legal and civic reference for readers, advocates, and legal professionals seeking to understand the **existing federal statutory frameworks and judicial doctrines** applicable to coordinated deprivations of civil rights. It is **not** a pleading, indictment, or allegation against any individual or entity. Rather, it summarizes operative law that remains fully in force but is frequently under-taught, under-invoked, or treated as theoretical despite its continued validity.

The statutes and doctrines summarized here exist precisely for circumstances in which **ordinary civil-rights remedies—particularly injunction-only relief—prove insufficient to deter repeated or coordinated violations.**

This appendix summarizes existing federal and Iowa statutes for informational purposes. It does not constitute legal advice or instruction.

C.1 Under Color of Law — What Courts Have Already Decided

United States v. Classic, 313 U.S. 299 (1941)

Holding:

Government officials act *under color of law* when they misuse power made possible by their official position, even if their actions violate state law or the Constitution. The appearance or pretense of lawful authority is sufficient.

Screws v. United States, 325 U.S. 91 (1945)

Holding:

Abuse of official authority that deprives individuals of constitutional rights constitutes state action under color of law, even when the conduct is unauthorized or illegal.

Principle:

Unconstitutional enforcement is still government action. Officials cannot evade responsibility by claiming they were merely enforcing statutes later found unlawful.

C.2 Civil and Criminal Conspiracy

United States v. Jimenez Recio, 537 U.S. 270 (2003)

Holding:

A conspiracy does not automatically terminate simply because its original objective fails or is thwarted.

Principle:

Coordination, intent, and acts taken in furtherance of a conspiracy remain legally significant even after defeat in court or policy reversal. Conspiracy doctrine focuses on **collective action**, not isolated acts.

C.3 Continuing Injury and Legal Injury

Havens Realty Corp. v. Coleman, 455 U.S. 363 (1982)

Holding:

Ongoing effects of unlawful conduct may constitute a continuing injury, allowing plaintiffs to challenge the persistent consequences of rights violations even when the initial act occurred earlier.

Bowman v. Davenport, 243 Iowa 1135 (1952)

Holding:

An injury in law is the invasion of a legal right, not merely physical harm or financial loss.

Principle:

Loss of legal protection itself—including exposure to discrimination, exclusion, or vulnerability—may constitute an actionable injury under civil-rights law.

C.4 42 U.S.C. § 1985(3) — Civil Conspiracy to Deprive Equal Protection

Statutory Overview

42 U.S.C. § 1985(3) provides a **civil cause of action** where two or more persons conspire to deprive a class of persons of the equal protection of the laws, or of equal privileges and immunities, and where an act in furtherance of the conspiracy causes injury.

Unlike § 1983, § 1985(3) is specifically designed to address **coordinated conduct**, not merely individual constitutional violations.

Griffin v. Breckenridge, 403 U.S. 88 (1971)

Holding:

Section 1985(3) reaches private or public conspiracies aimed at depriving a class of persons of equal protection of the laws, where an act in furtherance causes injury.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters v. Scott, 463 U.S. 825 (1983)

Holding:

Section 1985(3) requires proof of class-based discriminatory intent, but does **not** require that the conspiracy succeed in achieving its ultimate goal.

Principle:

Intent, coordination, and resulting injury—not success—are the core elements.

C.5 18 U.S.C. § 241 — Conspiracy Against Rights

Statutory Overview

18 U.S.C. § 241 makes it a federal crime for two or more persons to conspire to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any person in the free exercise or enjoyment of rights secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States.

The statute applies to conspiracies involving **state actors acting under color of law**, as well as private actors.

United States v. Price, 383 U.S. 787 (1966)

Holding:

Section 241 applies to conspiracies involving state officials acting under color of law and reaches coordinated efforts to deprive individuals of constitutional rights.

Principle:

Federal law explicitly addresses coordinated, institutional deprivations of rights where state authority is involved.

C.6 Civil RICO — Addressing Patterns, Not Isolated Acts

Statutory Overview

The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), codified at 18 U.S.C. §§ 1961–1964, provides criminal and civil remedies for **patterns of unlawful conduct** carried out through an enterprise.

Civil RICO focuses on:

- a pattern of related acts,
- continuity or threat of repetition,
- and injury resulting from that pattern.

Sedima, S.P.R.L. v. Imrex Co., 473 U.S. 479 (1985).

Holding:

Civil RICO is remedial in nature and must be interpreted broadly to address ongoing patterns of unlawful conduct causing harm.

H.J. Inc. v. Northwestern Bell Telephone Co., 492 U.S. 229 (1989)

Holding:

A “pattern” of racketeering activity requires related acts and continuity, either through ongoing conduct or a threat of repetition.

Principle:

RICO exists because Congress recognized that certain forms of coordinated wrongdoing persist when isolated injunctions or single-incident remedies prove ineffective.

C.7 Key Legal Concepts Referenced in This Document

Under Color of Law

Conduct carried out by officials using power possessed by virtue of state authority, even when that conduct exceeds or violates lawful authority.

Civil vs. Criminal Conspiracy

Civil conspiracy focuses on injury and remedy; criminal conspiracy focuses on punishment. Both center on coordinated action.

Continuing Injury

Harm that persists beyond an initial unlawful act, including ongoing deprivation of legal protections, economic harm, reputational damage, or exposure to discrimination.

Declaratory / Injunctive Relief vs. Restitution

Declaratory and injunctive relief establish what the law requires; restitution and damages provide deterrence. Without deterrence, unlawful conduct may recur.

Deterrence

A core principle of civil-rights enforcement. Remedies that impose no material cost on violators fail to prevent future violations.

C.8 Why These Authorities Matter Together

Taken together, these statutes and cases establish a consistent and longstanding principle:

When officials act collectively, under the appearance of legal authority, to deprive an identifiable group of legal protections—and when that deprivation causes continuing harm—**existing federal law already provides enforcement mechanisms.**

This appendix does **not** argue that any particular case must be brought.

It demonstrates that the **legal framework already exists**, has existed for decades, and was designed precisely for situations in which rights are repeatedly declared but not meaningfully enforced.

C.9 Closing Note to the Legal Profession

The statutes and doctrines summarized here are not obscure. They are taught in constitutional law, civil-rights litigation, and federal courts courses across the United States. Their infrequent application to state-level political conduct reflects not doctrinal weakness, but an enforcement gap.

When rights are repeatedly declared unlawful yet violations carry no material consequence, the law itself supplies mechanisms for escalation. The question is not whether those mechanisms exist, but whether the legal profession is willing to use them.

Appendix D — Relevant Iowa Civil-Rights Statutes, Case Holdings, and Accountability Frameworks

This appendix provides a non-exhaustive summary of existing Iowa statutory and common-law frameworks that govern misconduct by public officials, coordinated deprivation of legal rights, and continuing legal injury under state law. It is offered as a reference for readers seeking to understand Iowa’s own accountability mechanisms independent of federal enforcement.

Nothing in this appendix constitutes legal advice, instruction, or an allegation against any individual or entity. It documents operative law currently in force within the State of Iowa.

D.1 Misconduct in Office and Official Oppression

Iowa Code § 721.2 — Misconduct in Office

Public officials commit misconduct in office when they knowingly act contrary to law or exceed their lawful authority while performing official duties.

Iowa Code § 721.1 — Official Oppression

Prohibits public officers from intentionally subjecting another person to mistreatment, arrest, detention, or deprivation of rights under color of office.

Principle:

Iowa law recognizes that abuse of official authority—even when clothed in formal legislative or administrative action—may constitute actionable misconduct.

D.2 Conspiracy Under Iowa Law

Iowa Code § 706.1 — Conspiracy

Defines conspiracy as an agreement between two or more persons to commit a public offense, accompanied by an overt act in furtherance of that agreement.

Principle:

As under federal law, conspiracy in Iowa focuses on **coordination and intent**, not merely on whether the unlawful objective ultimately succeeds.

D.3 Continuing Legal Injury in Iowa Jurisprudence

Bowman v. Davenport, 243 Iowa 1135 (1952)

The Iowa Supreme Court recognized that an “injury in law” is the invasion of a legal right, distinct from physical or economic harm.

Principle:

Loss of statutory protection, exposure to discrimination, or removal of legal recourse may itself constitute a continuing injury under Iowa law.

D.4 Civil Remedies and Restitution Under Iowa Law

Iowa Code Chapter 685 — Iowa False Claims Act

Provides civil penalties and treble damages for misuse of public funds or false representations made to the state.

Principle:

Iowa law, like federal law, recognizes restitution and financial accountability as essential deterrents when public power is misused.

D.5 Ongoing Criminal Conduct (Iowa RICO)

Iowa Code Chapter 706A — Ongoing Criminal Conduct

Provides criminal and civil remedies for patterns of related unlawful activity carried out by an enterprise.

Principle:

This statute exists to address coordinated or repeated misconduct that cannot be adequately remedied through isolated injunctions or single enforcement actions.

D.6 Oath of Office and Public Duty

Iowa Code § 63.10 — Oath of Office

Public officials swear to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Iowa.

Principle:

Violation of sworn constitutional duty may carry legal consequences under Iowa law when combined with knowing misconduct or abuse of authority.

D.7 Iowa's Independent Responsibility

Taken together, these statutes and cases establish that Iowa possesses **independent legal authority** to address:

- coordinated deprivations of legal protection,

- abuse of official power,
- continuing injury caused by removal or denial of statutory rights, and
- misuse of public authority or funds.

Accountability under Iowa law does not depend on federal enforcement priorities. Iowa’s constitutional order contains its own mechanisms for restraint, remedy, and repair.

D.8 Closing Note on State Responsibility

The existence of these statutes reflects a longstanding principle of Iowa governance: public authority is conditional, limited, and accountable.

When rights are removed, remedies withheld, and harm continues without repair, the issue is not the absence of law—but whether the law is being honored.

Bibliography (Chicago Manual)

Iowa Family Policy Center / The FAMiLY Leader

Iowa Family Policy Center. *Articles of Incorporation*. State of Iowa, 1996.

Rodgers, Grant. “Bob Vander Plaats Rebrands Iowa Family Policy Center as The FAMiLY Leader.” *Des Moines Register*, August 10, 2010.

Marriage Equality and Judicial Context

Varnum v. Brien, 763 N.W.2d 862 (Iowa 2009).

Post-Varnum Advocacy Expansion

One Iowa. *Annual Reports*. 2009–2014.

National LGBTQ Task Force. *State Equality Index Reports*. 2010–2015.

Language Adoption and Institutional Records

LexisNexis. *State Legislative Tracking: Iowa*.

Iowa Department of Education. *Policy Archives*. 1995–2020.

Des Moines Register. Digital Archive. 1995–2020.

Iowa Civil Rights Act (2007)

Iowa General Assembly. *2007 Iowa Acts*, chap. 191.

Iowa House Judiciary Committee. *Debate Transcripts on the Iowa Civil Rights Act*. 2007.

Iowa Civil Rights Commission: Enforcement Decline and Structural Erosion

Des Moines Register Editorial Board. “Iowa Should Stop Tilting the Scales in Civil Rights Enforcement.” *Des Moines Register*, May 14, 2023.

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/editorials/2023/05/14/iowa-civil-rights-commission-tilting-scales/70204156007/>

Des Moines Register Staff. “Why 60% of Iowa Workers’ Civil Rights Complaints Aren’t Investigated.” *Des Moines Register*, May 8, 2023.

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2023/05/08/iowa-civil-rights-commission-60-percent-complaints-discrimination-not-investigated-employees-workers/70177674007/>

Obradovich, Kathie. “Iowa House Votes to Turn Iowa Civil Rights Commission into Advisory Panel.” *Iowa Capital Dispatch*, April 16, 2024.

<https://iowacapitaldispatch.com/2024/04/16/iowa-house-votes-to-turn-iowa-civil-rights-commission-into-advisory-panel/>

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Iowa Advisory Committee. *Examining Employment Discrimination and Administrative Closures in Iowa*. Washington, DC, February 14, 2023.

<https://www.usccr.gov/reports/2023/iowa-advisory-committee-report-examining-employment-discrimination-and-administrative>

Environmental Endocrine Disruption and Chemical Exposure

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Atrazine Updates*. Washington, DC: EPA, 2003–2023.

Hayes, Tyrone B., et al. “Hermaphroditic, Demasculinized Frogs after Exposure to the Herbicide Atrazine.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 99, no. 8 (2002): 5476–5480.

Endocrine Society. “Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals.” *Endocrine Reviews* 36, no. 6 (2015): E1–E150.

Neurobiology, Hormones, and Sexual Differentiation

Hines, Melissa. “Prenatal Testosterone and Gender-Related Behaviour.” *Endocrine Development* 8 (2005): 1–13.

Swaab, Dick F. “Sexual Differentiation of the Human Brain.” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 8, no. 2 (2007): 91–98.

Youth Transition, Media, and Surgical Outcomes

Jennings, Jazz. *Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen*. New York: Crown Archetype, 2016.

Jennings, Jazz. Interview by *ABC News*. June 2018.

Clinical Warnings and Professional Debate

Sondra Wilson for Iowa Governor: Response to Transgender Related Inquiries — Page 105 of 106

Bowers, Marci L. Remarks at the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Symposium. Montreal, September 2022.

Shrier, Abigail. “Top Trans Doctors Blow the Whistle.” *The Free Press*, March 2023.

Sports Physiology and Performance

Hilton, Emma, and Tommy R. Lundberg. “Transgender Women in the Female Category of Sport: Perspectives on Testosterone Suppression and Performance Advantage.” *Sports Medicine* 51, no. 2 (2021): 199–214.

Harper, Joanna, et al. “How Does Hormone Transition in Transgender Women Change Body Composition, Muscle Strength and Hemoglobin?” *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 55, no. 11 (2021): 577–583.

Administrative Law and Enforcement Theory

Mashaw, Jerry L. *Bureaucratic Justice: Managing Social Security Disability Claims*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983.

Sunstein, Cass R. “Law and Administration after Chevron.” *Columbia Law Review* 90, no. 8 (1990): 2071–2120.

Healthcare Access and Coverage Retrenchment

Iowa Department of Human Services. *Medicaid Coverage Bulletins*. 2019–2023.

Good v. Iowa Department of Human Services. Polk County District Court filings.

* All sources cited are publicly available court records, peer-reviewed scientific literature, government publications, or contemporaneous reporting. Full bibliography located at the end of this document.

** Paid for by Sondra Wilson for Iowa Governor