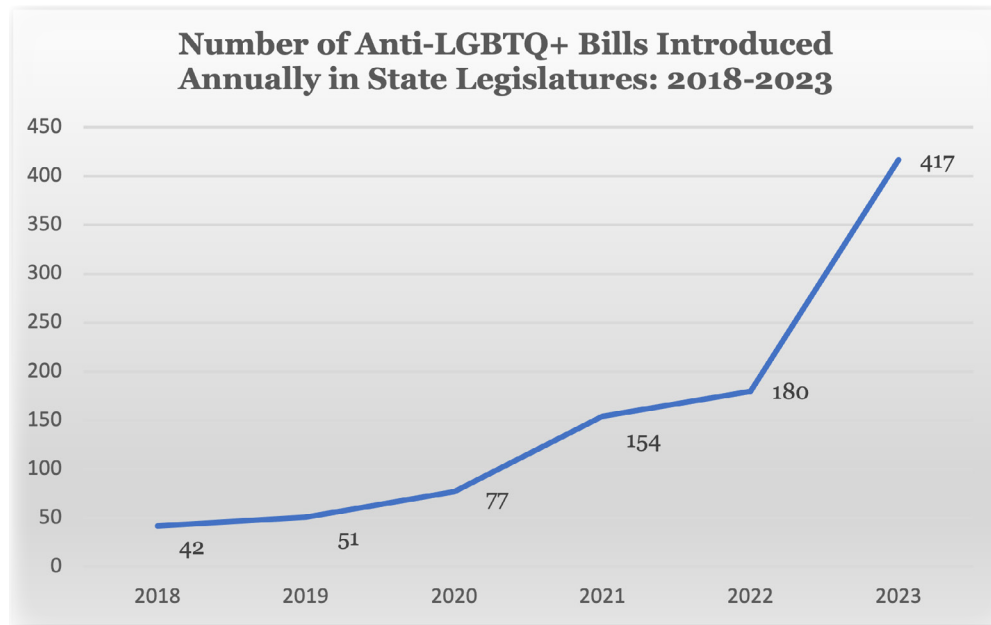




NEW LAWS ARE HARMING LGBTQ+ STUDENTS. HERE'S HOW TO HELP.



Note: Data as of April 3, 2023. Bills carried over from previous legislative sessions are included in each year.

Source: [American Civil Liberties Union](#), as reported on [CNN](#)

As the number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills in state legislatures has increased in recent years, K-12 educators are facing dual challenges related to teaching LGBTQ+ students and to teaching students about issues related to gender identity. More than 20 states have introduced bills that emulated and/or expand upon Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay" legislation, [according to Education Week](#). Enacted in 2022, that law limits lessons on gender identity.

Transgender children have been a target of many of the bills. In fact, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an [anti-trans bill](#) just last week.

"[Forced outing](#)" laws are also under consideration in several states. This legislation requires teachers to tell parents if students begin using different pronouns or names. Some bills require teachers to obtain parental consent before using a student's preferred pronoun. Others allow teachers to refuse to use preferred pronouns.

[Idaho](#) recently passed a law that prohibits transgender students from using school bath-

rooms aligned with their gender identities. And [Kentucky](#) banned gender-affirming health-care for transgender children.

Additionally, several states are considering parental “[bills of rights](#)” that give parents the explicit right to inspect curricula and library materials.

“A powerful body of recent research demonstrates the harms such legislation creates in schools,” NEPC Fellows [Elizabeth J. Meyer](#) and [Bethy Leonardi](#) of the University of Colorado Boulder and [Harper B. Keenan](#) of the University of British Columbia write in *[Transgender Students and Policy in K-12 Public Schools: Acknowledging Historical Harms and Taking Steps Toward a Promising Future](#)*, an NEPC policy brief published last year.

For example, the brief notes that trans students have poorer mental health outcomes and feel less safe when denied access to bathrooms misaligned with their self-determined gender. Students also feel safer when their teachers use instructional resources that include people who are LGBTQ+.

The brief concludes with recommendations to rescind discriminatory state laws and to approve stronger federal protections for students who are LGBTQ+. However, it also notes that policies and laws are only part of the solution. In order to create environments in which students who are LGBTQ+ can thrive, districts and schools will also need to embrace deeper, cultural changes that facilitate the establishment of networks for student support and inclusivity. In the current political climate, this task will be challenging and complex.

Professor Leonardi co-leads [A Queer Endeavor](#) at CU Boulder, a project that provides support to educators trying to create school environments that are inclusive of all students. On July 20th and 21st of this year, the organization will hold its fourth annual Educator Institute for Equity and Justice. To register, participate as a presenter, or to just learn more about the hybrid in-person/online event, go to <http://www.aqe-eiej.org/>.

NEPC Resources on LGBTQ Issues

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