Governor Youngkin’s proposed *2022 Model Policies on the Privacy, Dignity, and Respect for all Students and Parents in Virginia’s Public Schools1* “reaffirms the rights of parents to determine how their children will be raised and educated… where empowering parents is not only a fundamental right, but it is essential in improving outcomes for all children in Virginia.”1 (pg. 1) Within the proposed policies, Governor Youngkin’s guiding principle is that “parents have the right to make decisions with respect to their children. Policies shall be drafted to safeguard parents’ rights with respect to their child, and to facilitate the exercise to those rights.”1 (pg. 2) As such, the policies strip individuals in Virginia’s Public Schools of their own autonomy, where parents have the right to “instill in and culture values and beliefs for their own children and make decisions concerning their children’s education and upbringing in accordance with their customs, faith, and family culture.”1 (pg. 2)

As such, the proposed policies prescribe that “schools shall defer to parents to make the best decisions with respect to their children… (a) what names, nicknames, and/or pronouns if any shall be used for their children by teachers and school staff while at school, (b) whether their child engages in any counseling or social transition at school that encourages a gender that differs from their child’s sex, or (c) whether their child expresses a gender that differs from their child’s sex while at school.”1 (pg. 2)

The Virginia Athletic Trainers’ Association opposes the proposed changes of model policies. These proposed changes to the model policies will further marginalize LGBTQIA+ youth in Virginia’s public schools and prevent athletic trainers in the secondary setting from providing compassionate care that respects the rights, well-being, and dignity of the patients served.2

While the proposed changes of model policies restrict schools from an athletic trainer from changing the patients name in the official records (including medical documentation); however, the Virginia Athletic Trainers’ Association supports addressing the patient by whatever name and pronouns they wish to use. If the patient is in psychological distress, as mandatory reporters, it remains our duty to report to such distress appropriately and treat the patient with respect and dignity while providing the best care possible.

As of 2022, there are more than 34,000 LGBTQIA+ youth in the United States, with 48% reporting as transgender or non-binary.3 Less than 1 in 3 transgender or non-binary youth found their home to be gender affirming, resulting in 45% of LGBTQIA+ youth considering suicide in the past year.3 As athletic trainers, our patients are our primary concern. We place their needs and well-being above all other stakeholders to provide competent care in all decisions and advocate for the best medical interest and safety of our patient.2 The proposed changes to model policies prevent athletic trainers from making decisions and providing care in the best medical interest and safety of the patients we serve.

The VATA is committed to improving the quality of health care for Virginians through education, advocacy, and cooperative efforts with other health care professionals and organizations.  We actively promote the profession and represent the interests of its membership with integrity.

For more resources on patient care for transgender patients, visit the [NATA LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee’s resources page](https://www.nata.org/professional-interests/inclusion/resources). The NATA LGBTQ+ AC Committee Chair and District Representatives are here to help with any questions or guidance surrounding TGD patient care.

References

1. Virginia Department of Education. 2022 Model policies on the privacy, dignity, and respect for all students and parents in Virginia’s Public Schools. Accessed September 28, 2022 from: <https://doe.virginia.gov/support/gender-diversity/2022-model-policies-on-the-privacy-dignity-and-respect-for-all-students-town-hall.pdf>
2. National Athletic Trainers’ Association. Code of Ethics. Accessed September 28, 2022 from: <https://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/nata_code_of_ethics_2022.pdf>.
3. The Trevor Project. 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health. Accessed September 30, 2022 from: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/>.