

Resolution Opposing the Department of Health and Human Services Memo

Graduate Workers of Columbia - UAW Organizing Committee condemns in the strongest terms the leaked Department of Health and Human Services memo that seeks to redefine sex in federal law as “a person’s status as male or female based on immutable biological traits identifiable by or before birth.” This definition would deny transgender and gender non-conforming people protection under federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. The proposal would limit equal access to health care, housing, education, and fair treatment under the law. It would deny many trans people functional documentation of their identity, citizenship, and immigration status, and the ability to travel freely. For others, it would force them to choose between the life-threatening dangers of the closet and living in a state of constant exposure and vulnerability. It sends a chilling message that the existence and identity of transgender people is not recognized by the government, and deepens ongoing attacks on the civil rights of all citizens, legal immigrants and undocumented people. It compounds the threats already facing unions and union members in the form of expansion of Right to Work laws and the recent Janus vs AFSCME Supreme Court ruling.

GWC is committed to the flourishing and self-determination of all its workers and the Columbia community we serve. Our membership includes people of all gender identities. Our students, faculty, and mentees include people of all gender identities. Our union cannot stand for its workers and community unless it unequivocally defends the legitimacy and protection of all gender identities.

The Department of Health and Human Services proposal represents a challenge to the central principle of the labor movement: that unions defend the dignity, rights and equality of all workers. It is a threat to worker solidarity across job categories, unions, and all genders, ethnicities, races, and abilities. We oppose the DHHS memo on the grounds that it promotes a broader context of transphobia and a climate of fear. As union members who fight to protect our co-workers, our families, our students, and our community, we oppose threats to transgender people expressed in the leaked memo. And we stand in solidarity with all LGBTQ people in our community who may be experiencing heightened stress from harassment and discrimination.

Graduate Workers of Columbia - UAW Local 2110, Organizing Committee

