

Serving the Transgender Communi-

## May & June Announcements

**The Harrisburg Meeting** will be in-person on May 8th and June 12th at 8:00 pm at MCC of the Spirit, our normal meeting location. A maximum of 30 people will be permitted. **Advanced registration is required! No drop-ins will be permitted. No exceptions.** Please email us at [info@transcentralpa.org](mailto:info@transcentralpa.org) to reserve your spot. We will reply to you via an email with your confirmation to attend.

There will not be a hosted dinner preceding the meeting. All attendees must comply with the following protocols:

1. Face masks must be worn while in the MCC.
2. Maintain 6-feet of spacing between individuals.
3. You may not attend if you have any of symptoms listed on [Pennsylvania Coronavirus Symptoms & Testing](#) website.
4. Out-of-state visitors must comply with the Pennsylvania [COVID-19 Information for Travelers](#) restrictions.

Individuals not following these protocols will be directed to leave. We thank you for complying with these directives for the safety of all. Please email us with questions at [info@transcentralpa.org](mailto:info@transcentralpa.org).

**Family Virtual Support Group Meeting** on Monday, May 17th and Jun 21st at 7:00 pm. This group brings together parents and other adult family members seeking to better understand and support their children of all ages dealing with issues of gender identity. The group operates under a policy of confidentiality in order to create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. Please come and join us for informal sharing and mutual support! The group meets online via Zoom on the third Monday of the month. For more information, please email us



*House bill would ban Pennsylvania transgender athletes from women's interscholastic athletics. See story page 4.*

at [family@TransCentralPA.org](mailto:family@TransCentralPA.org).

**Parents of Transgender Individuals**, please email us at [family@TransCentralPA.org](mailto:family@TransCentralPA.org) for information and support.

**York Virtual Support Group Meeting on Saturday, May 22nd and June 26th.** Join the Rainbow Rose Center and [TransCentralPA](#) as we hold the York Transgender Support Group Online. Join us from 8:30-10:00 pm on Saturday, May 22nd and June 24th on Zoom! Zoom is a free, online video conferencing program that is easy to use. If you would like to take part in this virtual meeting, please send us an email and we can provide additional information on how to join the meeting.

**York County Pride** is Saturday, June 5th. York County Pride, presented by WellSpan Health, celebrates the full inclusion of ALL wonderfully diverse citizens in ALL aspects of civic life; regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, mental or physical ability, social status, or economic status. The event, held virtually on June 5, 2021 at 11:00AM and streaming on demand, features speakers, music, dance, theater, poetry, spoken word, and performance art, retail vendors, history, and education. Visit the [website](#).

**Keystone 2022** We plan to announce the dates of the 2022 Keystone Conference in early summer. If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at [info@Keystone-Conference.org](mailto:info@Keystone-Conference.org).

**TCPA Annual Membership Dues** are \$20. Dues are used to pay for meeting space, program literature, our website and our affiliation with and support of community groups and activities such as Common Roads, the Community Center, Central Pennsylvania Pride, etc. Please continue to support our organization and efforts by joining or renewing your membership—we **are making a difference!** **Testing for COVID-19**, this [interactive map provides locations of testing sites](#) near you. Most sites requires you to call ahead and schedule an appointment for testing. Click [here](#) for CDC guidance on managing your symptoms at home, and click [here](#) for PA Department of Health guidance on self-isolation while awaiting results.

**Send Us Your Input!** Got a Question or Announcements? Maybe you've seen a great article or have an event to share? Photo's are always appreciated and if you would like them published in the next TCPA Newsletter. E-mail us at [info@transcentralpa.org](mailto:info@transcentralpa.org).

# From the President

Greetings!

I have much good news to share!

On June 5, the Rainbow Rose Center is hosting the first-ever York County Pride virtually. TransCentralPA is proud to be a Champion-Level sponsor of the event and are excited to show support for the Rainbow Rose Center. Throughout this past year, we've partnered with the Rainbow Rose Center to offer online support meetings through the pandemic. We look forward to strengthening our relationship with the Rainbow Rose Center and working more closely to help serve our community in Central Pennsylvania. For more information about the [Rainbow Rose Center](#), visit [their website](#).

TransCentralPA has also made a donation to the Lancaster LGBTQ+ Coalition in support of their HEART program, or Homelessness Emergency Assistance & Response Team. HEART looks to help persons in our community who are experiencing homelessness in the Lancaster County and help them access safe and inclusive housing as well as critical resources. [Click here for more information about the Lancaster LGBTQ+ Coalition](#).

With all the craziness this past year, we may have failed to mention that TransCentralPA also made a \$15,000 donation to Alder Health for their 35th Anniversary. Alder Health mission is to improve the health and well-being of individuals living with HIV/AIDS and members of the LGBTQ community by providing a culturally competent and affirming environment that empowers the people we serve. They have long been a



*Kristy Snow*

great source for transgender health and counseling in Central Pennsylvania and we are happy to support their much needed services. [Visit Alder Health's website for more information](#).

Through the Keystone Conference, our flag-ship event, we've been able to raise and give back tens of thousands of dollars to our local community. This is in addition to the enormous and positive economic impact that Keystone has on the businesses of Central Pennsylvania which has been estimated to be millions of dollars since its inception in 2009. We've been able to support the [LGBT Center in Harrisburg](#) and the [Pennsylvania Youth Congress](#) as well as other organizations. And we will continue to look for organizations that want to partner with us to make our community better.

I would also like to recognize the fact that our very own Holly Evans, received the Keystone Business Alliance's Business Excellence Member of the Year Award—how's that for an award title! Kudos to Holly for doing such an amazing job representing both TransCentralPA and the transgender community. Thanks Holly for all your hard work! I would also like to point out that the Rainbow Rose Center won the Advocate of the Year Award, which is much deserved recognition for the incredible work their team has put in over the last few years to get a center up and running in York County. The [Keystone Business Alliance](#) is Central Pennsylvania's LGBT Chamber of Commerce which TransCentralPA has been an organizational member for many, many years.

All this great work both humbles me and gives me immense pride in the great work many of us do in this community. Our past TransCentralPA Presidents, Holly Evans, Joanne Carroll and Jeanine Ruhsam did an amazing job at the helm of this organization, promoting and championing for transgender rights in Pennsylvania. And let's not forget that the Founding Executive Director of National Center for Transgender Equality Mara Keisling and now Assistant Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine were at one time, members of our small, little group here in Central Pennsylvania. If being a member of this group and community has taught me anything, it's that we are limited by our own imaginations and together we can do great things. I am so excited for the future!

- Kristy

## Suicide Resources

People dealing with gender identity issues are not immune from other sources of depression and mental illness. There is help available to you with bearing the unbearable. IN A CRISIS, CALL the local and national resources first. It is best to make contact via phone or in person; emailing often does not provide the immediate response needed in an emergency. These are the professionals and organizations trained to help you during a crisis. You are not alone.

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)  
[24/7 Support](#)  
[800-273-TALK](#)

[National Hopeline Network](#)  
[24/7 Support](#)  
[800-784-2433](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)  
[1-800-SUICIDE](#)  
[1-866-488-7386](#)



## When They Found Out Trans Students Were in Need, These Hoosier Teens Stepped Up to Help Out

Gwendolyn Smith, [LGBTQ Nation](#)



Nick Johnson, a 16-year-old student at a charter school in Indiana, overheard another trans masculine student at their school complain about their lack of male clothing.

Thinking about his own issues finding appropriate clothes in his middle school days – and assuming other students were facing a similar lack of access – spurred him to come up with a solution: a safe place for those seeking clothes that match their gender identity.

Johnson reached out to another student and they hatched a plan: the Rainbow Jacket Project.

“My friend Emme Lang was on board with the idea immediately, and we both planned to start up a clothing bank as a school project the next year,” Johnson told [LGBTQ Nation](#). “We are both International Baccalaureate students at Signature School in Evansville, so the project actually counts as credit towards our diploma.”

“Even if it didn’t, though, we would still do it, because it’s something that means a lot to both of us,” Johnson added.

Getting clothing can still be a challenge for those who may be exploring their gender. Some may lack adequate funds or may feel uncomfortable shopping in a different gendered section from how they are currently presenting. The goal is to provide a space where people can feel safe and comfortable building a wardrobe.

To house the Rainbow Jacket Project, Johnson and Lang reached out to an unlikely source: St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, asking if they would be willing to provide some space. “I con-

tacted St. Paul’s about being allowed to use extra space, because it’s downtown and close to our school, so we could walk there,” said Johnson. “They agreed, we aren’t religiously affiliated; we’re just using the church’s space.

As word has spread, so have the number of donations coming into the project.

“At first we collected stuff from friends and family,” said Johnson. “As word spread about the project, we got many more donations coming in. The marching band at Castle High School did a clothing drive for us where they all played tag and brought in clothes.

“In the past few weeks we’ve been receiving tons of donations from people in the community who have seen us on the news, in the paper, or on social media and who want to help our cause.”

“It’s wonderful to see how the community is coming together to support us,” added Johnson.

The Rainbow Jacket Project just held its opening day, which featured a steady stream of people both picking out attire for themselves as well as people dropping off donations.

“It was really satisfying to see how our hard work has paid off,” Johnson said.

The project has become so big, in fact, that they’re having to ask that donations be dropped off only during their operating hours, and are seeking additional adult volunteers to assist with the project.

“We want to help bring trans, queer, and gender non-conforming youth in Evansville together and to let them know that there are others like them, that there are people who want to help,” said Johnson.

## Scorsese-Produced Film Centers Stormy Trans Romance

Neal Broverman, [Advocate Reporter](#)

Port Authority, a forthcoming film about a cisgender white man and a trans woman of color falling in love, released its trailer in advance of its May 28 opening in theaters.

Written and directed by queer filmmaker Danielle Lessovitz, Port Authority tells the story of Paul, a young man (played by Fionn Whitehead) who leaves his Pennsylvania home for New York City, where he meets and falls in love with Wye, a bold and beautiful trans woman played by Leyna Bloom. Whitehead’s character becomes immersed in Wye’s world, which includes the city’s vibrant ball scene. But soon Paul’s past, including his profound anger, enters the present and jeopardizes the relationship.

The film premiered at Cannes two years ago to critical acclaim but is just being released next month (and available digitally June 1). The film was executive produced by Martin Scorsese, the iconic director behind Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, Goodfellas, The Irishman, and Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore.

[See Trailer Here](#)



# Pennsylvania's Horrible Anti-Transgender Sports Bill Is Horrible in Dozens of Other States, Too

John L. Micek, [Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#)

Good Friday Morning, Fellow Seekers.

An eternity ago — or was it just Monday? — a quintet of Republican lawmakers in the state House trotted out a bill that would ban transgender women from participating in women's school sports in Pennsylvania.

As the Capital-Star's Stephen Caruso reported, the bill, euphemistically titled the "Protect Women's Sports Act," has little chance of becoming law, or surviving a court challenge. As an added bonus, since transgender women are women, and there's no evidence that transgender women outperform cisgendered women, it's also science defying.

All of which is proven not to be an impediment to this terrible idea spreading like a pernicious legislative weed across the country.

A conservative Christian group, Alliance Defending Freedom, has pushed similar legislation in 30 states restricting transgender student athletes.

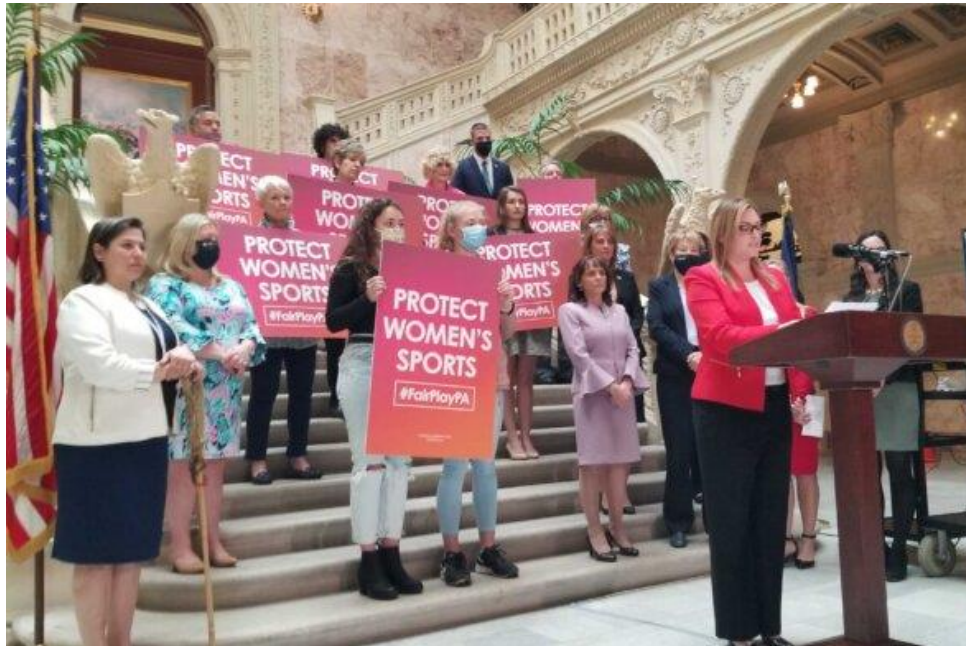
Their bill is modeled on an Idaho law according to the Idaho Capital Sun, a sibling site of the Capital-Star.

A bit of background: the Alliance Defending Freedom is an Arizona-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit that focuses on advocacy, training and funding legal cases. According to its website, it focuses on the issues of "religious freedom, sanctity of life and marriage and family," the Capital-Sun's Clark Corbin reported on April 2.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has classified the organization as an anti-LGBTQ hate group, a designation, you will be shocked to learn, that the ADF, as it's known, disputes. A spokesman for the group called the designation a fund-raising tactic by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

"We are very disappointed in SPLC's attack against organizations like Alliance Defending Freedom that are standing up for female athletes, standing up for religious freedom and standing up for free speech," Matt Sharp, the ADF's senior counsel, told the Capital-Sun.

As the Southern Poverty Law Center



Capital-Star photo by Stephen Caruso

notes, the ADF has seen its clout grow nationally since the 2016 election, "[becoming] one of the most influential groups informing the [former Trump] administration's attack on LGBTQ rights," SPLC officials wrote of the group.

The vehicle that's being used to spread this bill from state to state, like anti-LGBTQ kudzu, is one of the oldest legislative tricks in the books: Model legislation. It's what it sounds like, a generic template that's filled in, like Mad Libs, to suit the conditions in different states. And it's by no means unique to the political right. Progressives also have embraced model bills.

As Corbin reports, it can be tough for the public to tell if bills before their state General Assemblies originated via model legislation or if they came about more organically. One tool political scientists have been using is anti-plagiarism software that will flag matches in different bills across different states. And it's getting easier with advances in technology, Jaclyn Kettler, an assistant professor of political science at Boise State University, told Corbin.

"Model legislation isn't anything new, there have been groups or organizations providing model legislation for a long time," Kettler said. "ALEC [the American Legislative Exchange Coun-

cil, a conservative organization] has gotten a lot of attention from reporters and scholars in terms of how successful they have been in terms of getting model legislation introduced and passed in many state legislatures, particularly in those more conservative legislatures."

Back in Pennsylvania, LGBTQ activists are lining up in opposition to the bill.

"As the first trans person ever elected in Pennsylvania history, I know bigotry when I see it," Tyler Titus, a member of the Erie school board, and a transgender man, told our Frank Pizzoli, adding, "Hate may be the Pennsylvania GOP's platform, but it's not Pennsylvania's. We will defeat this effort because this is not who we are."



## 'No One Is Asking for This': LGBTQ Advocates Lash Transgender Sports Bill

Frank Pizzoli, [Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#)

Pennsylvania's transgender community is pushing back against a Republican-backed bill in the state House that would ban transgender women and girls from participating in interscholastic athletics.

And one member of the region's transgender community also says she'll be mounting an electoral challenge to the bill's prime sponsor.

Janelle Crossley, a transgender woman, told the Capital-Star that she's looking to a 2022 rematch with Rep. Barbara Gleim, R-Cumberland. In 2020, Crossley lost to Gleim by a margin of 21,678-12,431, according to Ballotpedia.com.

About 25 people joined Crossley and the progressive advocacy group Cumberland Valley Rising in a protest outside Gleim's Carlisle office after the bill was announced.

The bill is also sponsored by Reps. Martina A. White, R-Philadelphia, Dawn W. Keefer, R-York, Valerie S. Gaydos, R-Allegheny, and Stephanie Borowicz, R-Clinton.

Pennsylvania's bill joins 82 other pieces of anti-trans legislation filed across the nation as of March 13, according to the Human Rights Campaign's Wyatt Ronan. That number surpasses 79 anti-trans bills introduced in 2020.

Proponents of the bill cite an unfair advantage transgender athletes may have over cis-gendered athletes. Opponents of the bill cite the legislation as a solution in search of a problem.

"There have not been any cases of transgender girls dominating sports leagues. We have seen high anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts from rejection of someone's gender identity," Crossley told the Capital-Star.

Crossley says she thinks "legislators need to work on the issues that truly impact young people and women in sports like lower pay to female athletes, less media coverage for women's sports and cultural environments that lead to high dropout rates for diverse athletes, instead of creating problems and 'solutions' that hurt the kids we're supposed to be protecting."



"Playing sports is not all about winning, it is how you play the game, learning, and teamwork," she added.

Joanne Carroll, the executive director of Trans Advocacy Pennsylvania, and a member of the Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affair told the Capital-Star that "there is no evidence that transgender females have any physical advantage over cisgender females. This is a solution to an imagined problem. This is put forward to create another wedge issue for the culture wars."

Carroll frames the anti-trans bill in Pennsylvania and those introduced nationwide within recent queer civil rights benchmarks.

The U.S. Supreme Court has "has not been kind to the GOP. Marriage equality was lost to them because of Obergefell v. Hodges, (marriage-equality) and abortion remains a heartburn in spite of Roe v. Wade, because they've lost a myriad of state challenges. They are still smarting over Bostock v. Clayton County," Carroll told the Capital-Star, referring to the high court's 6-3 decision in June 2020 finding that the Civil Rights Act covered discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

"As a former women's swim team member in high school, I care about protecting women's sports and know that transgender girls in no way threaten them," Rep. Jessica Benham, D-Allegheny, the first out LGBTQ woman in the General Assembly, said. "This bill is a complete invasion of young people's privacy in response to a non-existent issue. It's also likely an unconstitutional violation of transgender people's rights."

Tyler Titus, the first transgender person elected to public office when they won a seat on the Erie School Board in 2017, told the Capital-Star that "Pennsylvania GOP has officially jumped on board the national trend of hateful anti-trans legislation. They target the most vulnerable with culture wars because they believe it's good politics, and that our ability to live fulfilled lives is something worth sacrificing.

"As the first trans person ever elected in Pennsylvania history, I know bigotry when I see it," Titus said, adding, "Hate may be the Pennsylvania GOP's platform, but it's not Pennsylvania's. We will defeat this effort because this is not who we are," Titus

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... 'Sports Bill' from page 5.

said.

Karen Foley, the executive director of the Lancaster LGBTQ+ Coalition, told the Capital-Star she thought the bill was "poorly crafted and a scientifically baseless argument that allowing trans athletes to compete forces girls to compete against biological boys."

The Pennsylvania Youth Congress calls the bill "a dangerous bill targeting transgender children... While we are confident this bill will not pass, its introduction in our state sends a devastating message to trans children and youth.

"Trans youth deserve inclusion and respect. Enough with taking cheap political points at the expense of the very lives of trans youth," Preston Heldibridle the PYC's State Policy Associate, said. "We are your children, students, and community members, not the boogeyman. Talk with us. Please take the time to learn about why this exclusionary bill is so hurtful and damaging – and far removed from the reality of school athletics in Pennsylvania."

Further, Heldibridle shared, "The truth is that Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly support LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections and want us to continue moving our Commonwealth forward to be more inclusive. There are countless examples of trans students playing school sports without any issues and full affirmation by other athletes."

Kristy Snow, the president of TransCentralPA, told the Capital-Star she's not aware of any problems.

"I am not aware of any in the state. They are fabricating a problem that does not exist," she said. She also posits that "the vast majority of Pennsylvanians support children rights and want to see all children succeed. They will not support a handful of misguided and uninformed lawmakers to dehumanize and discriminate against a group of kids who just want to have fun playing sports."

Tesla Taliaferro, the president of the Rainbow Rose Center, is a trans man. He told the Capital-Star that "We encourage the inclusion of transgender students in the sports that align with their gender identity,

and we are always willing to engage with and educate school administrators on this topic if they have questions."

He encourages students and parents with concerns to reach out to the Rainbow Rose Center at [info@rainbowrosecenter.org](mailto:info@rainbowrosecenter.org).

School sports teach a great many lessons that impact a student athlete long after their athletic days are over – a sense of community and belonging, a belief in one's abilities, loyalty to others, and increased organizational skills, Taliaferro noted.

"These lessons should not be denied to anyone, especially on the basis of ignorance. Scientific evidence has shown that transgender women do not have a competitive advantage over those who are assigned female at birth. Our representatives should rely on science and facts rather than opinion to create laws," Taliaferro said.

Long-time supporter of queer civil rights, Rep. Dan Frankel, D-Allegheny, said in a news release "that representatives who truly are tapped into their youth sports communities know that teams and leagues have overwhelmingly welcomed trans athletes, accepted them for who they are, and quickly gotten to the business of training to improve skills and bonding to build relationships."

"Truly, nobody is asking for this. It was dreamed up in a laboratory of wedge issues, not on a soccer field or at a swim practice. This is about campaign fundraising, not girls or women or sports," Frankel said.

## Teen Becomes One of the First Trans Eagle Scout

Molly Sprayregen, [LGBTQ Nation](#)

17-year-old Jace King has become the first out transgender Eagle Scout in his small town of Splendora, Texas. King had always dreamed of becoming an Eagle Scout like his brother, but due to the scouts' ban on transgender boys, he was not allowed to join until 2019.



He worked with two different troops and was able to accomplish this feat in just over two years, despite the fact that it usually takes between four and six. He did all of this while also having to confront discrimination and hate along the way.

"I've been berated and looked down upon by older adults who were associated with the scouts, saying that I shouldn't be there," They said that I should be in the Girl Scouts instead."

ABC also reported that comments had to be turned off on a community Facebook page that shared the news of King's achievement after so many of them became hateful.

But King's mom, Micheline King, said that there have also been many positive messages and that her son's strength has helped change minds.

"I've seen a lot of backlash, but truth be told, when Jace became true to themselves, it made them a stronger person. In that right, as they became stronger...wiser people began to accept them just for who they are," his mother said.

"It doesn't matter who you are, what you're born as, or what you identify as, you can make great feats because it is possible for anyone," he said.

Barriers have been steadily breaking in the Eagle Scouts for the past few years. In 2017, they began allowing transgender boys, and in 2019, they decided to allow girls to join as well, a decision that led to a transgender teen becoming one of the first female Eagle Scouts.



# 'Some Fights Need More Help Than Others': NFL Star Adds His Voice to Battle against Transgender Sports Bills

Frank Pizzoli, [Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#)

Amidst a news cycle of state houses nationwide introducing about 200 pieces of legislation barring trans athletes from team sports, including one now before the Pennsylvania House, the Capital-Star spoke with former NFL player Ryan Russell. He is bisexual.

Russell is a three-year veteran who was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys in 2015 after a successful college career at Purdue. He played one season with the Cowboys and two for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He started in seven games for the Bucs in 2017.

Russell hopes to rejoin the league. In 2019, when he came out as bisexual in an ESPN interview, he said being out and being in the NFL shouldn't be mutually exclusive.

And, he believes, neither should trans athletes be excluded from professional or any level of sports because of who they are. In the interview, Russell said, "...other than the love for my family, playing football again in the NFL is my dream." The same can be for transgender athletes at levels who aspire to join the game.

For one NFL meet-and-greet, Russell said he promised himself that: This is the last time I will ever interview for a job as anything other than my full self. Out of love, admiration and respect, I want the next team to sign me valuing me for what I do and knowing who I truly am.

Now he's bringing that same enthusiastic commitment to the plight of transgender athletes in a recent article for The Guardian.

"My article brought me lots of support and encouragement. I asked people to try to understand the position of transgender athletes who are capable of playing sports at all levels," Russell told Capital-Star.

For Russell, sports is a microcosm of our larger society representing all of our stories.

He worries that working to include trans athletes at all levels of sports may appear to others interested in social justice as yet another issue that will take away from their main focus of, for example, the Black Lives



Former NFL star Ryan Russell

Matter movement, equal pay for women, police reform, and prison reform.

"I think we need to realize that some fights need more help than others and we all need to work together to create change," he said.

"We're all fighting the same fight. This isn't a competition among different demographic groups or different kinds of people. The way people are born should not eliminate them from participating in life at its fullest and at all levels in all groups. We all need to be involved," he told the Capital-Star.

"That's the beauty of advocacy. Although I may have a special podium from which to address important issues, I would prefer to have 100 advocates with smaller platforms. That way creating change is more of a communal experience, same as sports" he said.

Russell feels strongly that we all need to drop the old ways of viewing each other regardless of who we are. Headlines from the day of our phone interview may indicate the initial vehemence with which anti-trans sports and other related bills were introduced may not sit well with the general public.

Where the general public and elected officials stand in their respective state legislatures is a difficult and constantly changing pulse to take.

A recent NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll found that even most Republicans oppose the attacks on transgender children.

Only 29 percent of Republicans said they "support a bill that prohibits transgender student athletes from joining sports teams that match their gender identity."

Averaged across all political affiliations, the bills mandating genital examinations or excluding the girls altogether only garner 28 percent support. 67 percent oppose the measures." The poll is important because the plethora of bills have been introduced in mainly GOP-controlled legislatures.

Despite polling, four state legislatures – Arizona, Tennessee, Alabama, and North Dakota – passed anti-LGBTQ bills this week. Both Arizona and Tennessee passed laws banning teachers from mentioning LGBTQ people without parental approval.

See 'NFL' page 8...

## Bangladesh TV Hires Country's First Transgender News Anchor

Julhas Alam, [Associated Press](#)



A Bangladeshi satellite television station has hired the country's first transgender news anchor, saying it hopes the appointment will help change society.

Tashnuva Anan Shishir, who previously worked as a rights activist and actress, debuted on Dhaka-based Boishakhi TV on Monday, International Women's Day. She read a three-minute news bulletin, and after finishing cried as her colleagues applauded and cheered.

"I was very nervous, I was feeling so much emotional, but I had in my mind that I must overcome this ordeal, this final test," Shishir, 29, said in an interview..

In her early teens, she began to live publicly her female identity. She said family members, relatives and neighbors started teasing her and she was bullied and sexually exploited.

She started feeling that it was impossible to continue living and attempted suicide, she said. The worst thing that happened was that her father stopped talking to her, saying she was the reason that her family was losing face.

"I left home," she said.

She moved from her family's house in a southern coastal district to live a solitary life in the capital, where she underwent hormone therapy, worked for charities and acted with a local theater group. In January, she began studying public health at a Dhaka university, which she is continuing alongside her job at the TV station.

Bangladesh officially has more than 10,000 transgender people, but activists say the actual number is much higher in the nation of more than 160 million people. The LGBT community faces social isolation, sexual abuse and other forms of harassment. Finding employment is very difficult, and many live by begging or selling sex.

Since 2013, the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has allowed transgender people to identify themselves as a separate gender. They were given voting rights in 2018.

Boishakhi TV said it wanted to be part of the changes and has hired a second transgender person in its drama department.

"Our prime minister has taken many steps for the transgender people. Encouraged by such steps, we have appointed two transgender people. We want the attitude of society to change through these appointments," said Tipu Alam Milon, the station's deputy managing director.

... 'NFL' from page 7.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey vetoed that state's bill. Alabama and North Dakota passed laws banning transgender girls from participating in school sports. North Dakota's bill was vetoed by Gov. Doug Burgum. All four states have Republican governors.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson vetoed similar legislation this month, but the Republican-majority legislature overrode the veto, making it law.

Florida's experience saw a House bill calling for genital, DNA, and hormone exams of girls who want to participate in sports as a way to exclude trans athletes stall this week when its state Senate debated a similar measure.

North Carolina Senate leader Phil Berger through a spokesman this week indicated he thought there is no path forward for a GOP bill banning health care treatment for transgender teens, making a floor vote unlikely.

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, a Democrat, has vetoed a bill passed by her Republican-controlled Legislature barring transgender girls from playing school sports.

"This legislation sends a devastating message that Kansas is not welcoming to all children and their families, including those who are transgender — who are already at a higher risk of bullying, discrimination, and suicide," Kelly said in a statement, according to KMBC-TV.

Last week, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards, also a Democrat, strongly opposed anti-trans legislation as his state lawmakers considered numerous proposals targeting transgender youth.

In Pennsylvania, long-time supporter of queer civil rights, Rep. Dan Frankel, D-Allegheny, said in a statement that "representatives who truly are tapped into their youth sports communities know that teams and leagues have overwhelmingly welcomed trans athletes, accepted them for who they are, and quickly gotten to the business of training to improve skills and bonding to build relationships."

"Truly, nobody is asking for this. It was dreamed up in a laboratory of wedge issues, not on a soccer field or at a swim practice. This is about campaign fundraising, not girls or women or sports," Frankel said.

Is there a sea change ahead?

"We are not our forefathers and it's important that we move in the direction that will improve all of our lives. That means we have a responsibility to challenge ourselves on what we know or what we think we know about each other," Russell concluded.



## Trans Employees Share Their Experiences Working at this LGBTQ-friendly Company

[LGBTQ Nation](#)

The freedom to be her authentic self is not something that Christine G. has ever taken for granted. In 2013, Christine realized she was transgender.

It was a much different time, she says.

“If you came out as transgender back then, it was likely you would be homeless, your parents would not accept you or you would not be considered for job opportunities,” says Christine, who today is an infrastructure engineer at USAA, which employs more than 35,000 people. “The main message I got from my online searches at the time was to pretend to be a boy for as long as possible, get a job, get insurance and whatever else you need, and when you come out, get ready to move to a new location where no one knows your past.”

Thankfully, Christine says, times have since changed for the better. She joined USAA in 2017 and got involved with the diversity business group (DBG) BOLD, where she became a leader. It was not an accident. For four consecutive years, the LGBTQ equality group, Human Rights Campaign, scored the San Antonio-based Fortune 100 diversified financial services group a 100 percent rating for its treatment of its queer employees.

At the time, Christine knew she was working within a supportive workplace but was trying to navigate how to come out to her teammates in the best way possible.

“I didn’t know if they were going to accept me, or if I would have to find a new position somewhere else on a different team,” recalls Christine. “Once I started as a BOLD leader, my coworkers and I started going to events together, and I found out that a lot of my coworkers were accepting of LGBTQ+ folks rather than being secretly or overtly opposed, as I had feared.” BOLD is the USAA Diversity Business Group for LGBTQ employees. It celebrates Pride month and supports the community throughout the year.

Christine says after she came out to her team, they immediately helped her with her name change, wanted to



*Hailie P. And friend*

learn about transgender identity, and how to interact respectfully in the workplace.

“I chose USAA because, in our hiring policy, it says we don’t discriminate on these sorts of things, such as gender identity, and it was important to me to support a company that held values that I believe in,” says Hailie.

“I was approached by a few of my teammates who said they would support me, and that’s what kind of drove me to come out to everyone – I knew they accepted me and that gave me the strength to be authentic,” she recalls.

Hailie says she chose to work at USAA because of the inclusive hiring policies. As a result, she would recommend it to others in her community.

Both Christine and Hailie wanted to ensure they paved the way for other transgender employees to come out in the workplace, so they worked on creating Transgender/Non-Binary resources and step-by-step guides that employees and teams use to facilitate the transgender transition.

“One of the things I noticed was that there weren’t many resources for transitioning employees – we had the USAA Handbook, but it wasn’t very detailed or include all the steps in the transition,” says Christine. “So, I thought I would try to make something

so others don’t have to go through what I did.”

Hailie says the playbook is not only important to facilitate employee transitions, but to better understand membership needs, as well.

“I think it’s hyper important that we have these resources available because this will allow our company to grow in understanding the trans community, which will translate into being able to support not only each other but our members as well,” says Hailie.

Since they’ve come out in the workplace, Christine and Hailie both agree that it has helped their work performance and the authentic way they are now able to live their lives.

“It feels like you’re in a cloud or constantly acting when you’re not being yourself – it’s a lot of work to keep up that persona and watch your behavior and mannerisms,” explains Christine. “Being myself now is so much more relieving – all this pain, this cognitive dissonance is gone, and I feel much more able to think clearly now.”