



RESEARCH IN ACTION

WWKP Literature Review on Transgender Care Impacts National Policy Debate

In April 2018, the What We Know Project at Cornell's Center for the Study of Inequality rolled out the largest online comprehensive [literature review](#) to date on the efficacy of transition-related care for the transgender population, sharing robust findings that gender transition has a positive effect on transgender well-being. Below are examples of how this research immediately impacted the national debate over transgender equality, particularly in the context of efforts to reinstate a ban on transgender military service.

Op-ed in the New York Times

Project director and co-lead researcher, Nathaniel Frank, published an [op-ed in the New York Times](#), titled, "The Pentagon Is Wrong. Gender Transition Is Effective." It described the research methodology and its policy implications, repudiating claims by the White House and Pentagon that transgender troops were unfit to serve their country. The op-ed and research results were shared widely by mainstream and social media including the [New York Times](#), numerous [LGBT litigation groups](#), the [Kaiser Health News "roundup,"](#) [Daily Kos](#), a citation in the [Scientific American](#) blog, and more.

Full story in conservative-leaning Washington Times

The conservative-leaning Washington Times [ran a story](#) entirely devoted to the WWKP research findings, entitled, "New study challenges Pentagon's conclusions about transgender troops and hormone therapy." It said: "A new study by Cornell University says research over the past 25 years points to a wide consensus that transgender medical treatment is effective, despite a Pentagon determination that the science remains uncertain. The university looked at 56 peer-reviewed studies on how hormone treatment or surgery can help transgender people. Ninety-three percent reported the treatment improved their well-being, [according to a summary provided by Cornell.](#)"

WWKP research forms basis for powerful public statements by medical experts

In March, WWKP directly advised some of the nation's largest medical and mental health organizations (including the AMA and both APA's) as they formulated position statements in response to the Pentagon's effort to reinstate its transgender ban. WWKP research thus informed a string of prominent statements condemning the military's ban and garnering national media coverage about the White House's refusal to accept scientific facts. See examples in the [New York Times](#), [Politico](#), [The Hill](#), and at the [APA](#).

Letter by fifty U.S. senators cites WWKP research

A [letter](#) to the Secretary of Defense spearheaded by U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and signed by fifty senators from both parties cited WWKP research in arguing that the Pentagon's proposed transgender ban "misrepresents the scientific consensus on gender dysphoria and falsely claims that transgender individuals cannot meet the same physical and mental health standards applied to others."

Center for American Progress pushes out WWKP research

The Center for American Progress, a major Washington think tank, ran a [detailed story](#) on the WWKP transgender research, entitled "Massive research analysis destroys conservative argument against letting trans people transition." It said: "New analysis of available research shows unequivocally that [transgender people benefit](#) from taking steps to transition their bodies to match their gender identity, contradicting popular conservative claims."

Major report by partner organization built around WWKP research

WWKP worked with the Palm Center to deploy a more detailed version of the transgender health research in a 55-page [report](#). Co-authored by Nathaniel (along with three former military Surgeons General and two other researchers), it is built around the [WWKP findings](#) that transition-related care is effective and can help transgender individuals function well, refuting the military's claims that they are too unstable to serve in uniform. The report attracted visibility at the highest levels, and stands to have a major, tangible impact on attitudes and policy around transgender equality. The NYT wrote an [editorial](#) about the topic built around the Palm study. Other [major media](#) also picked up the story, including [The Hill](#), which ran the headline: "Pentagon's own data contradicts recommendations on transgender troops." Senator Gillibrand [waved a copy of the study](#) in front of Defense Secretary Mattis while demanding that he explain why the proposed transgender ban conflicted with what the research on LGBT military service has found.

WWKP research cited in amicus briefs in federal litigation against transgender ban

WWKP research has proved invaluable to legal aid groups challenging the transgender ban in federal court. Those groups have submitted the above report as official filings, and also submitted [amicus briefs](#) that cite Nathaniel's op-ed and the WWKP research review on transgender treatment, taking directly to federal judges the message that there is no rational basis for treating transgender Americans unequally in the military.

***The Lancet* calls for universal health care, citing WWKP**

In June, *The Lancet*, one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world, [ran an editorial](#) entitled, "Transgender health: access to care under threat," which prominently featured and cited WWKP research on transgender well-being. It read: "a recent systematic review of studies assessing the effects of gender transition on transgender wellbeing found that medical therapies such as hormone therapy and surgery improved the overall wellbeing of transgender individuals and contributed to a better quality of life. In view of these benefits and the real needs of this vulnerable population, how can transgender Americans now be facing the possibility of being denied access to essential gender transition care...? Access to health care should be a fundamental human right for all citizens, particularly in a highly developed country such as the USA."