

What the Executive Order Weaponizing Gender Identity Means for Your Campus

Title of EO	Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government (January 20, 2025)
What is the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Characterizes the legal recognition of transgender, intersex, and nonbinary people as a form of “extremism” that threatens women. ● Directs federal agencies to only recognize two sexes (male and female), to define sex as “an individual’s immutable biological classification,” and to exclude gender identity from this definition. ● Asserts that “sex” is determined “at conception” according to the size of the reproductive cell that the “sex” produces, an assertion that has no scientific basis. ● Disregards the scholarly consensus that gender identity is variable and mutable and not based on a “biological reality,” and demonizes this academic research as a dangerous “ideology.” ● Orders the deletion and/or manipulation of vast amounts of existing federal guidance and communications, including any “statements, policies, regulations, forms, communications, or other internal and external messages” on the vague and arbitrary grounds that they “promote or otherwise inculcate gender ideology.” ● Instructs the secretaries of state and homeland security to stop issuing identity documents (for example, visas and passports) with sex designations in conflict with the new definition. ● Directs the attorney general to issue guidance that Title VII and Title IX do not require “gender identity-based access to single-sex spaces.” ● Instructs the Department of Education to rescind guidance documents and resources for protecting LGBTQ+ students. ● Rescinds previous EOs expanding protections for LGBTQ+ people and specifically transgender students. ● Rescinds EOs that clarified that sex-based protections extend to gender identity and sexual orientation. ● Prohibits federal funding for the “promotion of gender ideology.” ● Abolishes the White House Gender Policy Council, established to combat violence against women and girls and to pursue equality for women and girls in all aspects of society. ● Asserts, with no evidence, that gender-inclusive spaces have “harmed women.”
How does it affect campus communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suppresses academic freedom of transgender, intersex, and non-binary researchers and teachers by undermining workplace protections, access to public space, and the ability to travel. ● Constrains the freedom to learn for transgender, intersex, and non-binary students by removing protections and restricting access to campus life. ● Chills freedom of expression by banning words such as “gender,” banning concepts such as gender identity, and imposing narrow and arbitrary definitions of words such as “sex” for federal employees, agencies, and funding recipients. ● Feeds a moral panic around gender on campus. ● Imposes ideological federal government judgments on gender issues on campuses, displacing local governance. ● Eliminates funding for research on transgender populations and issues. ● Threatens funding for research on any gender-related issues and forces researchers to adopt federal definitions of sex. ● Raises threat of using Title IX as a means of punishing “noncompliant” educational institutions.

Who else is under attack?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LGBTQ+ communities, especially transgender, intersex, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming children and adults. ● Faculty, students, and staff of any educational institution receiving federal funds. ● K-12 students and educators (see also Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling EO) ● Defenders of free speech, the First Amendment, and academic freedom. ● American democracy, which requires an informed and educated citizenry.
Who benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Authoritarian leaders wishing to enforce strict gender/sexual norms and limit bodily and reproductive autonomy for everyone. ● Christian nationalists advancing white supremacist family values agendas and weaponizing paternalistic notions of “defending women and girls” to counter equality, inclusion, and democratic principles. ● Right-wing coalitions trying to delegitimize academic research, undermine critical inquiry and institutional autonomy, and foster distrust in higher education. ● Wealthy donors and government leaders trying to privatize public schools and expand voucher programs by discrediting public school systems.
What can you do / How do we fight back?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlight the absurdity of any claim to “defend” women and girls from an administration filled with domestic abusers and sexual predators, especially when those “defenses” entail dismantling the very policies and practices that have been essential to the advancement of women and girls’ equality and safety. ● Personalize the stories of transgender, intersex, and non-binary students, faculty, researchers, and campus workers. ● Work with organizations protecting the rights of transgender, intersex, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming people. ● Emphasize the connections between anti-trans hostility and attacks on racial justice, reproductive rights, and academic freedom. ● Avoid anticipatory obedience in teaching and research. ● Join your campus union. If there is no union on your campus, join the AAUP as an active or associate member. ● If you or someone you know is adversely impacted by the EOs, share your story with lawyers at Democracy 2025, LDF, or Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law ● Write an op-ed in your local paper, weekly journal, blog post to share how students, staff, and administrators are being targeted by this EO and share with CDAF@aaup.org.
Additional resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anti-Trans Executive Order: What You Need to Know, Advocates for Trans Equality ● The Assault on Gender and Gender Studies, AAUP ● Education Council’s analysis ● “Why Is the Idea of Gender Provoking a Backlash the World Over?” by Judith Butler