

Trans Solidarity

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The Berkeley Federation of Teachers 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 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 functionally deny many trans people 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.

As is stated in our Constitution, we are an organization dedicated to mutual assistance and cooperation. Our membership includes certificated employees of diverse gender identities. Furthermore, given that we are educators serving diverse student populations, we stand for equality in all that we do.

The Department of Health and Human Services proposal represents a challenge to the central principle of the labor movement, that unions stand for dignity, rights and equality for all workers. It is a threat to worker solidarity across job categories, between unions and for 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 that makes our tasks of organizing and building power with our members even more difficult. As union members who fight to protect our coworkers, our families and our communities, we oppose threats to transgender people expressed in the leaked memo. And we stand in solidarity with all LGBTQ people who may be experiencing heightened stress of forms of harassment and discrimination.