

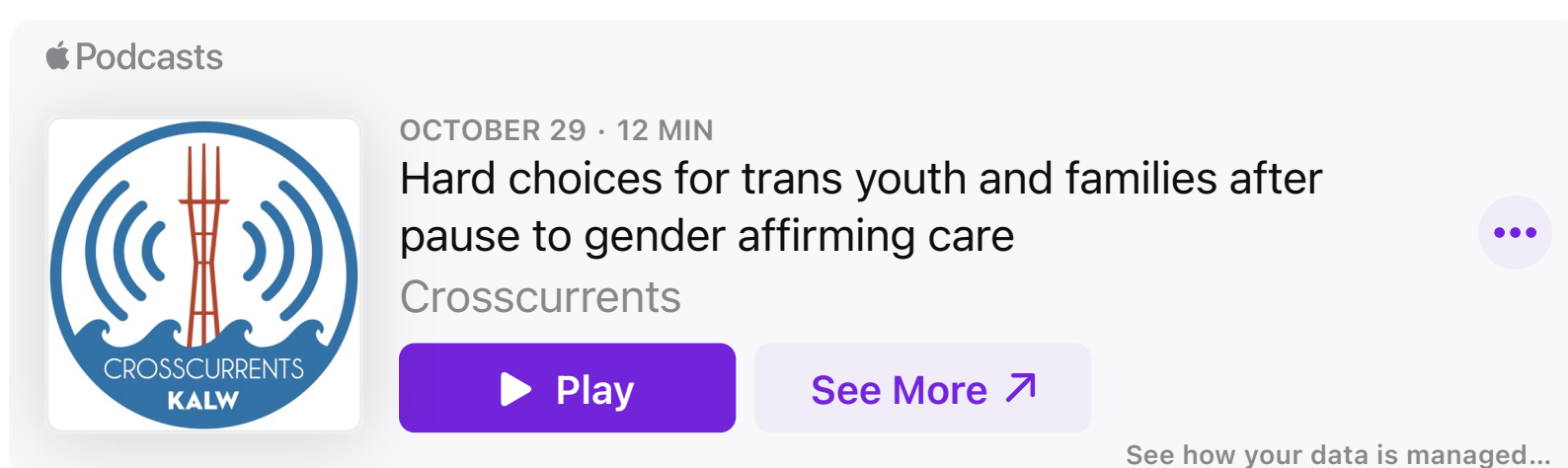
Trans youth and families face hard choices after Bay Area clinics pause gender affirming care

Over the summer, Bay Area medical centers and clinics Stanford Medical and Kaiser Permanente paused gender affirming surgeries for youth under 19 years old. Now, parents of transgender kids are facing some new, hard decisions. Some are even making plans to leave the Bay Area, which is known for its vibrant queer community.

Desmond Meagley, via 91.7 KALW • October 30, 2025



Calder Storm waves a trans flag over a crowd of counterprotestors at a rally for trans youth outside of a Kaiser Permanente clinic in San Francisco on July 25, 2025.



This story originally aired on 91.7 KALW on Oct. 29, 2025. Desmond Meagley was part of KALW's 2025 Summer Internship cohort.

Steve and Carolyn Stone (not their real names) have two kids, and live in the East Bay. In 2023, when their youngest child was in middle school, she came out to them as trans. The following year, she attended her graduation in a dress.

Carolyn Stone said that she looked beautiful.

"It was really important to her. She glowed, and she looked happier than I've seen her in a long time," Carolyn said. "She was lighter. She was happy. I think she felt like she was real."

Steve agreed.

"It was just so obvious that she was happy, so obvious that she was relaxing into her body," he said.

At the same time, conservative leaders were drawing the blueprint for Donald Trump's second presidential term.

"Last summer, our trans daughter, she said, 'Hey, is Project 2025 for real?'" Steve said. "And I said, 'Yeah, yeah, they're really, that's what they want to do.' And she said, 'Great. So when are we leaving the country?'"

Steve said that he tried his best to conceal his own anxiety around what a second Trump term might mean for both of their daughters. But as the 2024 presidential election came and went, the family's discussions of leaving the country only became more serious, and more urgent.

"We're being presented with hard choices," Steve said. "We've all had days when we're like, 'Let's get outta here. This is not safe. This is incredibly bad.' And days when we were like, 'We need to stay and fight,' or 'It's not so bad that we have to leave,' or 'Do we really want to give up all of our friendships and everything that living here means?'"

The family's fears cemented over the summer, when a number of California medical institutions announced they would pause surgeries to treat gender dysphoria in patients under 19 years old. That includes access to top and bottom surgery, facial feminization surgeries, and in some cases puberty blocking implants. In the Bay Area, the biggest institutions were Kaiser Permanente and Stanford Medical Center.

The months leading up to those decisions were confusing and chaotic for California families with trans kids. Almost immediately after he was sworn into office in January, President Trump signed multiple executive orders making good on a number of his campaign promises. One called for federally-funded institutions to define sex and gender as immutable — or else lose their government funding. Another would withhold federal funding for gender-affirming care for minors.

Here in California, access to gender-affirming healthcare is legally protected, even for minors. In February, in response to the president's actions, California Attorney General Rob Bonta spoke to the medical community, saying, "Hospitals and clinics have a legal obligation to provide equal access to healthcare services."

But some California medical institutions began to limit their services anyway.

On June 2, Stanford paused gender-affirming surgeries on patients under the age of 19. A number of parents told me that this included the placement of hormone-blocking implants. Days later, a small crowd of parents, Stanford employees, and allies gathered by the entrance to Stanford Medical Center.

Many of the parents I spoke to there were torn. They wanted to show up and speak out for their kids, but some of them feared that being visible could invite public scrutiny and harassment onto their families. During the rally, a speaker read anonymous comments from parents who said they were angry and afraid for their kids.

"Since my child has started her care, I've watched her blossom and come into herself," came one anonymous comment. "When hospitals like Stanford move to restrict this care, I can sense my child's options narrowing, her world becoming smaller, her personhood becoming less important than other children's."

Calder Storm was one of the parents at the rally. He and his husband have two kids. One of their kids is trans, and currently receives hormone replacement therapy (HRT) through Stanford.

"It's so infuriating," Calder said. "I think it's safe to say it has eroded the trust of parents who have children that are existing patients on HRT, because they have capitulated in advance, and even called things like a puberty blocker gender affirming surgery, which it's not."

Calder is a city employee from San Francisco, and he is also a transgender man himself.

"It's hard to separate out what's just being a present parent. I would hope that as a cis parent, I would want this just as badly for my child, because it's what my child needs," Calder said. "But yes, it's very personal. I don't know how it could not be."

"There are people who relocate from red states, if they can at all afford it, to come to California, because we have shield laws in place that are supposed to protect trans patients," Calder said. "And that is one of the things that is so frustrating about these large institutions complying in advance. A federal executive order does not equal a federal law."

California protects families fleeing other states to seek transition-related healthcare for their kids. Senator Scott Weiner sponsored a bill expanding the law to protect the medical records of transgender Californians, which passed into law in October. And the state attorney general has joined a lawsuit challenging the federal government's efforts to obtain medical records from California care providers.

A few weeks after the Stanford rally, on August 29, Kaiser Permanente also paused gender affirming surgeries for patients under 19 years old. In a statement to KALW, Kaiser said it would refer patients who had been waiting for surgery to outside providers. But according to a Kaiser employee who is familiar with the decision, those patients are still waiting on a referral, months later.

After Kaiser announced its pause, another protest was organized, this time outside the San Francisco Kaiser Permanente clinic. Members of a nurse's union, as well as state Senator Scott Weiner, joined the protest.

Sydney Simpson, a Kaiser Nurse and National Nurses United member, describes the moment they heard about Kaiser's decision.

"I was in a room full of nurse leaders and Kaiser administrators in a meeting, and it came through as an internal email," Sydney said. "We all received that email at the same time. It was just like a sigh of defeat went across the room, and I spent the rest of the day fielding phone calls about, 'How are we gonna protect these patients?'"

The Kaiser rally also drew some people who were opposed to letting youth transition. Sydney dismissed them.

"The science, the research, the studies support the efficacy of this care," they said. "The counter protesters — it's all witchcraft, it's wizardry. It's not science."

For over an hour, counterprotesters holding large, glossy signs fought to disrupt the rally. Lisa Disbrow — the Contra Costa chapter chair of Moms for Liberty — was among them.

"I'm a member and I oppose my medical payments going to transing students and the fallacy of gender-affirming care," Lisa said. "Once you start changing a body, you are not affirming, you are destroying. I see this situation as straight up abuse of young children who get confused. Children, when they get confused about their natural bodies, need genuine therapy. So we don't want anyone to be sterilized [or] lose their breasts. Healthy children need their natural bodies."

Steve and Carolyn Stone say their daughter is not confused.

"If you take away blockers, if you take away surgeries, you are doing harm to somebody," Carolyn said. "Our child was unhappy."

"The process around getting gender-affirming care, everyone has this mental image of like, oh yeah, doctors are going and doing this stuff willy-nilly," Steve said. "That's not our experience. Our experience is that it takes a long time. And once she knew who she was, she wanted to go be that person."

Their daughter is currently on hormone replacement therapy, which includes a puberty blocker. She doesn't get her care through Kaiser or Stanford, but the shrinking landscape of providers that work with youth, and the changing politics of the state, means the family has had to have some painful conversations.

"I see the effect on her. I try not to talk about it with her unless she wants to talk about it," he said. "I said to her not to one point, 'Well, in Texas, they tried to designate supporting a child through gender care as a form of child abuse.' She immediately said, 'If they do that at a federal level, I want you to disavow me. I want you to say it was my decision and you were opposed to it.'"

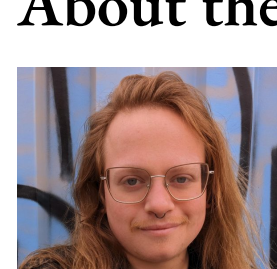
"And I said, 'I'm never doing that. There's no way I'll ever do that.' But that's who she is," Steve said. "That's what she's confronted with right now, that she'd ask a parent to lie about supporting her."

The Stone family is still undecided on whether they'll remain in the country.

"Many people have said to me, we're in a bubble here. It's gonna be fine. We just have to ride this out," Steve said. "And I don't believe that for a second."

They're getting ready so that, if they decide they have to, they can leave the East Bay — and the U.S. — behind.

About the Contributor



Desmond Meagley, Editor in Chief

Desmond Meagley (any/all) got hir start in journalism at the YR Media newsroom in 2015, writing about public health, education and gender. Since then hir work has appeared in CalMatters, The San Francisco Chronicle, Teen Vogue, KALW and more. Xe has also been honored with awards from the Journalism Association of Community Colleges, The Society of Professional Journalists NorCal, Public Radio News Directors Inc., and The National LGBTQ+ Journalists Association (NLGJA). Desmond is a recipient of the NLGJA's Leroy F. Aarons scholarship and a sitting board member of the NLGJA's Northern California chapter. Through hir contributions to The Citizen, Desmond aims to increase transparency and student participation throughout the Peralta Community College District. Outside of class, xe is usually drawing, cooking, or spending time with hir cat.

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