



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION

---

# ONLINE HARASSMENT, OFFLINE VIOLENCE

## UNCHECKED HARASSMENT OF GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE PROVIDERS AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, AND ITS OFFLINE VIOLENT CONSEQUENCES

---

Last Updated 12/8/22

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Anti-equality, online extremists are leading a proactive and coordinated campaign of hate against hospitals and medical providers who offer gender-affirming care for transgender, non-binary and questioning youth.
- Social media posts from accounts like Libs of TikTok and Matt Walsh kick off a cycle of harassment and stigma, with the ultimate goal of inciting violence and shutting down access to lifesaving and medically necessary gender affirming care:
  - ✦ Hate speech accounts post an inflammatory message full of disinformation about gender affirming care and call out a specific hospital or doctor by name.
  - ✦ The doctor and hospital almost immediately begin receiving a barrage of harassing and threatening messages online.
  - ✦ Offline, doctors and hospitals named in social media harassment campaigns face harassment and threats at their homes and workplaces. In the most extreme examples, doctors face death threats and hospitals face bomb threats, halting care for all patients
  - ✦ Extremist politicians looking to rile up the most extreme members of their base join in spreading the same transphobic rhetoric from their platforms, in some cases going so far as to introduce legislation to regulate children's hospitals and gender-affirming care providers.
  - ✦ Hospitals halt gender-affirming services or remove online resources and websites in order to protect the safety of their patients and staff.
- In an informal exploration across Facebook and Twitter, we identified 24 different hospitals and providers, across 21 states, who were directly attacked online following harassing, inflammatory and misleading posts from Libs of TikTok, Matt Walsh, and other right-wing accounts. Especially egregious posts/ attacks include:
  - ✦ Following a series of social media posts from right-wing provocateur Libs of TikTok that claimed Boston Children's Hospital's (BCH) Gender was performing hysterectomies on minors and thus the hospital "needs to be shut down," BCH has received three separate bomb threats, forcing temporary lockdowns and evacuations. The most recent bomb threat, from November 16th, specifically targeted BCH's gender affirming care clinic, as well as individual physicians, claiming bombs had been placed in both the clinics and three doctors' homes.
  - ✦ One investigative report from October found that 20 different children's hospitals had been named and targeted in online harassment campaigns in recent months, forcing 17 to remove or alter resources and content from their websites on gender-affirming care services. Five



additional hospitals who had not been specifically targeted also chose to remove or alter information. Several hospitals and clinics have had to halt services or shut down altogether.

- ✚ In the wake of the November mass shooting at LGBTQ+ club Club Q in Colorado Springs where 5 people were killed while attending a drag show, the founder of Gays Against Groomers, an anti-trans hate group which equates gender affirming care with child abuse, stated on Tucker's Carlson's show that "[shootings like the one at Club Q in Colorado Springs, Colo., would continue until the "evil agenda" of gender-affirming health care was put to an end.](#)"
- Despite this danger, social media companies have failed to act and stop the proliferation of violent rhetoric. Despite repeated violations of social media companies' own content policies, the most prominent accounts behind these campaigns have been allowed to remain active and committed to spreading extremist hate, receiving little more than a slap on the wrist in the form of temporary bans, rather than permanent deplatforming. With Elon Musk taking over Twitter, the spread of anti-trans rhetoric and hate speech, including that which targets doctors and hospitals, is likely to only proliferate — already, the frequency of tweets using anti-LGBTQ+ slurs on Twitter is up by [around 60%](#).
- Given the rise in coordinated hate speech, and the real-world violence it is engendering against doctors, hospitals, and the LGBTQ+ community at large, it is necessary for everyone — not just social media platforms — to work to stop this cycle of disinformation, violence and hate. Pro-equality politicians and LGBTQ+ allies alike need to speak out, and push for policies both online and offline that forcefully fight back against the tide of extremism.

## **INTRODUCTION**

**On August 11, 2022, the social media account Libs of TikTok posted a false claim to their 1.4 million Twitter followers and 55,000 Facebook accounts that Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) was providing hysterectomies to transgender minors.** Libs of TikTok, an account run by conservative activist Chaya Raichik, is just one of a growing number of extreme right-wing hate accounts that have been waging a war on the LGBTQ+ community and its allies, routinely posting transphobic and homophobic lies, misinformation, and conspiracies. These false claims were quickly debunked by [Politifact](#) on August 12th, but Libs of TikTok doubled down and claimed [Politifact was lying](#).

**Libs of TikTok's followers quickly followed that account's lead, and began harassing BCH and its staff, who experienced an unprecedented barrage of online harassment every time a new lie was posted.** Over the five days following the initial post, [Libs of TikTok tweeted or retweeted more than a dozen posts](#) about BCH, saying that the hospital "needs to be shut down." But much of the harassment BCH received came from Libs of TikTok's thousands of followers, who began their own attacks on BCH's social media accounts, calling for doctors to be "put in camps" or subjected to "Nuremberg type trials and punishments." Other posts accused doctors of being pedophiles or "groomers" who mutilate children's bodies, or issued threats that "a day of reckoning is coming" for doctors, where they would be "prosecuted for Child Abuse...[and for holding an] ideology does not belong in an American society." To date, many of these posts remain online months later, despite being in direct violation of Twitter and Meta's policies on abusive behavior/targeted harassment and hateful conduct.

**As a result of this sustained harassment, BCH was forced to take down educational videos and resources about gender-affirming care and remove information about these services from their website.**

**As online attacks intensified, offline harassment and violent threats began as well.** In a statement issued by [BCH on August 16th](#), the hospital noted that harassment had moved from "a large volume of hostile internet activity" to "phone calls, and harassing emails," leading the hospital to begin "working with law enforcement to protect or clinicians, staff, patients, family, and the broader



BCH community.” On August 17th, U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts Rachel S. Rollins [issued a statement](#) as well, calling the threats “disturbing to say the least” and reiterated the Department of Justice’s commitment to “ensure equal protection of transgender people under the law;” meanwhile, [“federal agents began monitoring threats”](#) against the hospital.

**This coordinated campaign of harassment culminated on August 30th, 2022, when BCH received a bomb threat, leading law enforcement to temporarily place the hospital on lockdown.** On August 31st, the Fenway Institute’s National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center received threatening voicemails and death threats [against a doctor on staff](#) who was co-affiliated with BCH. Less than two weeks later, another [series of bomb threats](#) were made online against BCH starting on September 9th, leading to enhanced police presence in the area. A third bomb threat led the hospital to [temporarily shut down again on November 16th](#), with the threat delivered via email by a sender who said “they were targeting the hospital because they opposed its Gender Multispecialty Service (GeMS) program” which provides gender-affirming care to transgender youth. No bomb was found in either incident. To date, two arrests have been made in connection with these threats. However, BCH has continued to [receive “dozens” more threats](#), as reported by [the FBI’s Boston Division](#), along with “harassing phone calls and e-mails, individual death threats, and threats of mass casualty attacks.”

**What occurred in Boston is just one example of coordinated campaigns of hate, violence, and harassment being waged both online and offline against health care providers and children’s hospitals simply for providing age-appropriate, best practice, medically necessary medical care to transgender youth.** What has emerged is a clear pattern of online harassment against gender-affirming care providers and clinics, and offline violence against the same, driven by hate speech that has proliferated unchecked on social media. Taking a page from the [extreme right-wing anti-abortion playbook](#), campaigns have been targeting dozens of [specific pediatricians and children’s hospitals involved in providing gender affirming care to transgender youth](#). In each case, initial attacks from large accounts like Libs of TikTok are quickly taken up by their increasingly radicalized followers, in what has been likened to stochastic terrorism, wherein [“someone is inspired to act violently in the name of something they perceive as wrong from messages they receive that are designed to inspire such action.”](#)

**As a result, health care providers and children’s hospitals following best-practice guidelines are now in the crosshairs of targeted social media harassment campaign which has begun to translate into offline, real-world violence.**

### **CYCLE OF ONLINE HATE AND STIGMA**

We are currently witnessing a relentless cycle of online hate and stigma which is translating to offline harassment and violence. This cycle will only worsen in the absence of intervention by social media platforms. The cycle typically follows the same five steps:

- 1. Hate speech accounts such as Libs of TikTok or Matt Walsh, a known anti-trans extremist at the alt-right news site The Daily Wire, post an inflammatory message full of disinformation about gender affirming care and call out a specific hospital or doctor by name.**
- 2. The doctor and hospital almost immediately begin receiving a barrage of harassing and threatening messages.**
- 3. Offline, doctors and hospitals named in social media harassment campaigns face harassment and threats at their homes and workplaces. In the most extreme examples, doctors face death threats and hospitals face bomb threats, halting care for all patients.**



4. **Extremist politicians looking to rile up the most extreme members of their base join in spreading the same transphobic rhetoric from their platforms, in some cases going so far as to introduce legislation to regulate children’s hospitals and gender-affirming care providers.**
5. **Hospitals halt gender-affirming services or remove online resources and websites in order to protect the safety of their patients and staff.**

### **STAGE 1: EXTREME HATE SPEECH ACCOUNTS TARGET A SPECIFIC CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL OR PROVIDER**

*In the first stage, hate speech accounts such as Libs of TikTok or Matt Walsh, a known transphobe at the alt-right news site The Daily Wire, post an inflammatory message full of disinformation about gender affirming care and call out a specific hospital or doctor by name.*

The first stage of this cycle of harassment and violence begins with a targeted social media campaign that names and attacks an individual doctor or hospital for offering gender affirming care. The campaign spreads misinformation about the best practice, age-appropriate medical care these doctors and hospitals provide.

Gender affirming care for transgender and non-binary people is supported by every credible medical, psychological, and pediatric organization, including the [American Medical Association \(AMA\)](#), the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#), the [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) and the [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry \(AACAP\)](#). Gender clinics at children’s hospitals and health care providers who provide [gender affirming care to youth](#) offer a range of safe, effective, age-appropriate health care options delivered in consultation with patients and their families. For younger transgender and non-binary patients, this largely includes providing mental health care. It may also include social support for their families as they navigate changes in their child’s gender expression. This can include changes to the child’s name, pronouns, clothing or hairstyle to better match their sense of self and improve their psychological well-being. Older youth work with therapists, health care providers and their parents or caretakers to determine the best treatment plan. This may include fully reversible puberty blockers which have been safely used for decades.

Despite the realities of what gender affirming care *is*, anti-trans activists continue to wage a war of disinformation, harassment and stochastic terrorism on pediatricians and children’s hospitals — with new hospitals targeted and harassed almost daily. Over the Summer and Fall of 2022, Libs of TikTok, Matt Walsh, and other right-wing hate accounts [targeted at least 20 children’s hospitals](#), as well as numerous individual doctors, simply for doing their job and providing best-practices medical care, some examples of which are noted below (See [Appendix](#) for additional examples of the sort of harassment, violent threats, and hate speech hospitals and providers encountered on social media between August and November 2022).

**On August 12th**, Libs of TikTok posted a video to Twitter and [Facebook](#) decrying the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh for putting out “promotional videos on puberty blockers.” Puberty blockers, which include FDA approved medications that are the [gold standard](#) treatment given to cisgender youth experiencing endocrine disorders, are [fully reversible](#) treatments that pause puberty and physical changes associated with pubertal development. They allow youth more time to continue exploring and understanding their gender identity with their families, their doctors and their therapists. This pause prevents the extreme distress that results from an unwanted puberty, a condition that leads to high rates of depression, self-harm and suicidality when left untreated.

Libs of TikTok, however, ignored the truth about the safety, efficacy, and reversibility of puberty blockers, and instead shared this post to claim that it is harmful care being recklessly provided by doctors that puts children at risk. On Twitter, the post was retweeted over 3,300 times, and on Facebook, it



was shared over 200 times. Comments on both the original post and on the Children's Hospital's social media accounts are filled with vile attacks, insults, threats, and accusations.



**Between August 18 and August 23**, Raichik went on the warpath, posting about eight different hospitals — including four different hospitals on August 18 alone:

- August 18: [Children's Mercy Hospital](#) (Kansas City, MO)
- August 18: [OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital](#) (Portland, OR)
- August 18: [Children's Hospital and Medical Center Omaha](#) (Omaha, NE)
- August 18: [Yale Pediatric Gender Clinic](#) (New Haven, CT)
- August 19: [Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital](#) (Chicago, IL)
- August 19: [Kaiser Permanente](#) (California)
- August 22: [Seattle Children's Hospital](#) (Seattle, WA)
- August 23: [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia](#) (Philadelphia, PA)

**On August 25th**, Libs of TikTok posted a video on Twitter and Facebook from a conversation she had with a switchboard operator at Washington DC's Children's National Hospital, in which the operator mistakenly stated that the hospital would perform hysterectomies on minors. Though the hospital immediately [issued a statement](#) correcting the record and noting they do not perform gender-affirming surgery on youth under age 18, Libs of TikTok continued to post more and more inflammatory lies about the hospital, including falsely disputing the hospital's claims.



HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

**Libs of Tik Tok** August 25 · 🌐

🚨 BREAKING EXCLUSIVE REPORT 🚨

Children's National Hospital of DC admits in damning audio recording that they do "gender affirming" hysterectomies on minors including 16-year-olds and "younger kids"

Full story here:

---

**Libs of Tik Tok** August 26 · 🌐

You can't gaslight your way out of this. I have it on record.

---

**Libs of Tik Tok** August 26 · 🌐

If this was a recorded call of a doctor saying they prescribed Ivermectin to covid patients, the hospital would be under investigation already. But they're just ripping out the uterus of young confused girls.. no big deal

In the comments of the Libs of TikTok posts, users urged Libs of TikTok to begin similar investigations into other children's hospitals, so they could be "put on the spot."

**Christopher Smith**  
That's pure evil. Has anyone considered sending this to their State senators and representatives?  
I'm in Georgia and I think hospitals like Eggleston's children hospital in Atlanta should be called and put on the spot also.

**Michelle Kelly**  
Now do Riley's in Indianapolis, they took down the photos of the genital mutilation doctors, but they still have a urologist and endocrinologist available for your eugenics supporters.  
<https://www.rileychildrens.org/depa.../gender-health-program>

RILEYCHILDRENS.ORG  
Gender Health Program

**Jake Thomas**  
**Cole Boyce Yeager** We need to hypothetically start asking about these types of surgeries for Austin. Then record it behind the scenes. Then leak it to Libs of TikTok. CHP should be worriedddd.

**On September 20**, Matt Walsh [tweeted a thread](#) about his so-called "investigation" into Vanderbilt University's Transgender Health Clinic, making false and inflammatory claims that doctors at Vanderbilt "castrate, sterilize, and mutilate" transgender youth by offering puberty blockers and hormone therapy and/or performing gender-affirming surgery—while ignoring reality that Vanderbilt does not even perform these surgeries on minors.



 **Matt Walsh**  @MattWalshBlog · Sep 20 ...  
BREAKING: My team and I have been investigating the transgender clinic at Vanderbilt here in Nashville. Vanderbilt drugs, chemically castrates, and performs double mastectomies on minors. But it gets worse. Here is what we found. Let's start at the beginning.

 **Matt Walsh**  @MattWalshBlog ...

They now castrate, sterilize, and mutilate minors as well as adults, while apparently taking steps to hide this activity from the public view.

This is what "health care" has become in modern America.

3:56 PM · Sep 20, 2022 · Twitter Web App

**On November 9th**, Seth Dillon, the CEO of right-wing satire site The Babylon Bee, made the inflammatory claim that it was, in fact, [children's hospitals and doctors who were committing violence by performing gender-affirming surgeries](#)—including falsely claiming these surgeries were provided on "young girls." He then encouraged the campaigns of harassment and violence of hospitals and doctors to continue, praising them for "reducing this violence and leading to laws that criminalize it."

 **Seth Dillon**  @SethDillon ...

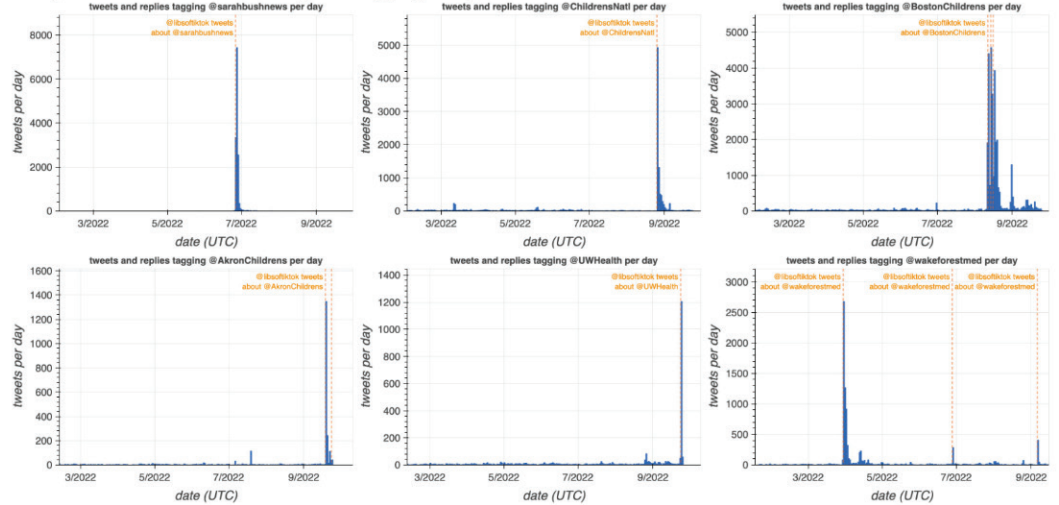
Violence occurs at children's hospitals whenever a young girl has her healthy breasts or uterus surgically removed. Thankfully, our efforts are successfully reducing this violence and leading to laws that criminalize it.

## **STAGE 2: CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS AND PHYSICIANS TARGETED IN POSTS BEGIN RECEIVING ONLINE HARASSMENT AND THREATS**

*In the second stage, the doctor and hospital almost immediately begin receiving a barrage of harassing and threatening messages.*

Almost immediately, any doctor or hospital tagged or named in a post will receive a huge spike in engagement on their social media channels—virtually all of it negative, threatening, or harassing in nature. [A Twitter user tracked engagement](#) after each of Libs of TikTok's tweets and found that the daily volume of Tweets engaging with hospital accounts went from essentially zero, to in the thousands, after being named in an attack by Libs of TikTok:

daily volume of tweets and replies tagging hospitals and medical facilities that @libsoftiktok tweeted about



For example, at 4:36PM on August 24th, Libs of TikTok [tweeted a video](#) from an adolescent medicine doctor at St. Louis Children's Hospital and the Washington University Transgender Center, where she explains the difference between biological sex, gender, and gender identity; Libs of TikTok posted the same video to her [Facebook account](#) at 9:42AM on August 25th. Within minutes of the first Tweet, the doctor began to receive hateful and threatening messages via Twitter and her work email.

The screenshot shows a Twitter post from the account 'Libs of Tik Tok' (verified) dated August 25, 2022, at 9:42 AM. The tweet text reads: "Doctor for adolescent medicine at St. Louis Children's Hospital says doctors assign a sex when babies are born based on genitalia, but it doesn't always match their identity. She goes on to explain that there are many genders a child can be." The tweet has 9 replies. Two replies are visible:

- Carl Wolf:** "More BS from groomers" (10w, 9 likes). Reply: "That's exactly who's behind A LOT of this. Pedophiles." (1 like)
- Matthew Waddle:** "Another one who'll hopefully spend time behind bars in the future for child abuse." (10w, 1 like)



### Fwd: A criticism

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Tengu Yama <Tengu\_Yama@live.com>  
 Sent: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 11:00 PM  
 To: [REDACTED]  
 Subject: A criticism

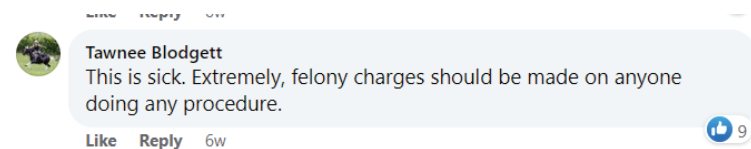
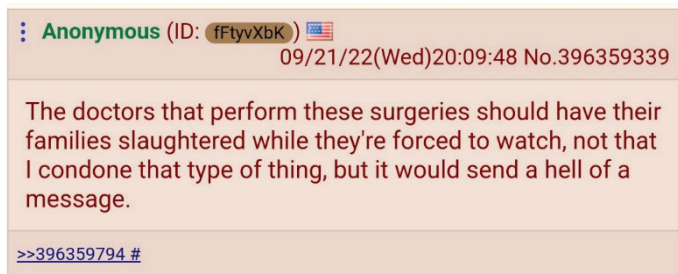
A pediatrician who advocates for the mutilation and sterilization of young children. All to pad her pockets. You're an evil, vile cunt. And you'll end up paying for these sins. Betraying the Hippocratic Oath all for some extra shekels in your pocket. Enjoy your just deserts you evil fucking whore.

**In another example, less than 24 hours after Matt Walsh tweeted his false claims and misrepresentations about Vanderbilt on September 21, various Twitter accounts associated with Vanderbilt began receiving harassing and threatening messages,** using much of the same phrasings and lies from Walsh's thread.



Post blurred to hide the composite image of names and faces of Board of Directors

Users on other social media message boards such as 4chan and Facebook began similarly calling for the deaths and imprisonment of physicians at Vanderbilt.





On September 23, Libs of TikTok posted a thread attacking University of Wisconsin for having a gender services program, including targeting the co-director, Dr. Katherine Gast, by name. Within hours, threatening Tweets began popping up, specifically naming Dr. Gast and threatening her directly.



### STAGE 3: ONLINE HARASSMENT CAMPAIGNS BEGIN TO MOVE INTO OFFLINE THREATS, HARASSMENT, AND VIOLENCE

*In the third stage, doctors and hospitals named in social media harassment campaigns face harassment and threats at their homes and workplaces. In the most extreme examples, doctors face death threats and hospitals face bomb threats, halting care for all patients.*

In this stage, online harassment campaigns increasingly move off social media platforms, leading to real-world consequences. Doctors begin facing death threats on their personal phones and at their homes, hospitals face bomb scares, and providers are muzzled and driven underground.

Since the “first known protest of gender-affirming pediatricians” in December 2020, multiple hospitals nationwide have faced in person protests at their clinics, leading at least one clinic to close its doors for good. However, increasingly, hospitals and doctors across the nation have been experiencing offline, real-world harm as a result of online campaigns waged against them. For instance:

- A plastic surgeon in Miami who has been targeted by Libs of TikTok had false complaints filed against her to the Federal Trade Commission and Florida medical boards by anti-trans activist organizations, in an attempt to have her and her clinic shut down.



- One pediatrician in the Midwest received a threatening voicemail and was then “*accosted in my apartment building by someone who had seen the Libs of TikTok post and berated me in the lobby calling me a groomer and a pedophile that mutilates children. She suggested out loud that I “f\*ck my dog” who I was walking at the time. Hitting every imaginable trope.*”
- Another pediatrician on the West Coast told HRC they have had protestors show up at their clinic with the pediatrician’s face depicted on their posters, as well as received threats that their “*body will be tied to the back of a care and driven all over Los Angeles*” and that “*I am considered “enemy #1 and people should take a gun and shoot me.*”
- Speaking to NBC News, Dr. Gast at University of Wisconsin (see above) noted she faced an almost immediate “scary and overwhelming” backlash after Libs of TikTok’s thread, with both her and her family having their personal information leaked online, and her clinic receiving “harassing phone calls.”
- After being targeted in a post by Libs of TikTok, the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh begins receiving harassing, hateful, and threatening messages, leading the hospital to be forced to begin “operating with enhanced security measures.”
- A Time article published in 2021 notes several incidents of doctors and hospitals across the country who experienced similar forms of harassment to those detailed in this report. This included pediatricians and children’s hospitals having fake complaints filed against them to their medical boards and experiencing protests at their clinics, while doctors reported receiving threatening letters at their homes, harassing phone calls on their personal phone numbers, and having their identities impersonated online.
- On November 20th, mere hours after a deadly shooting at Club Q, a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, left at least 5 LGBTQ+ people dead and 25 injured, Matt Walsh rejected claims that his campaign of anti-trans hate speech and attacks on gender affirming care providers could have played a role in motivating the shooting. Instead, he tweeted that “leftists” were trying to “blackmail us into accepting the castration and sterilization of children” and vowed to double down on his opposition to gender affirming care.



- Two days later, on November 22nd, the founder of Gays Against Groomers, an anti-transgender hate group which equates gender affirming care with child abuse, went on Tucker Carlson’s show and claimed shootings like the one at Club Q in Colorado Springs, Colo., would continue until the “evil agenda” of gender-affirming health care was put to an end.

Attacks have gotten so severe that on October 3, 2022 the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Medical Association (AMA) and Children's Hospital Association (CHA) sent a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Department of Justice (DOJ) sent a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Department of Justice (DOJ) urging an investigation into the "organizations, individuals, and entities coordinating, provoking, and carrying out bomb threats and threats of personal violence against children's hospitals and physicians across the U.S."

#### **STAGE 4: RIGHT WING POLITICIANS JOIN IN THE ATTACKS ON HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS,**

*In the fourth stage, right-wing politicians looking to rile up the most extreme members of their base join in spreading the same transphobic rhetoric from their platforms, in some cases going so far as to introduce legislation to regulate children's hospitals and gender affirming care providers.*

Alongside campaigns of harassment and intimidation, the lies and disinformation in these posts are picked up by extreme right-wing politicians, often without doing any fact checking of their claims — or actively ignoring when these lies have been debunked by credible sources. These politicians use this rhetoric to justify passing anti-trans policies and calling for investigations into doctors and hospitals, which limit the ability of doctors to provide safe, age-appropriate, life-saving medical care — and the ability of transgender youth and adults to access this care.

- **The very same day as Matt Walsh's first tweet about Vanderbilt's gender clinic**, the Tennessee Governor called for an investigation into the Vanderbilt clinic. Within 48 hours, Matt Walsh announced on Twitter that several state legislators in Tennessee were writing a bill with the goal of not only shutting down Vanderbilt's clinic, but making gender affirming care illegal statewide—while, at the same time, Tennessee Senator Marsha Blackburn had called for the FDA to investigate provision of puberty blockers in an attempt to end its provision nationwide.



**Matt Walsh** ✓  
@MattWalshBlog



MAJOR UPDATE: I have met with Tennessee Rep William Lamberth and Sen Jack Johnson. We are working on a bill to shut down Vanderbilt's child gender transition program and ban the practice in the state. Tennesseans do not want this barbarism in our state. We will put a stop to it.

4:29 PM · Sep 21, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

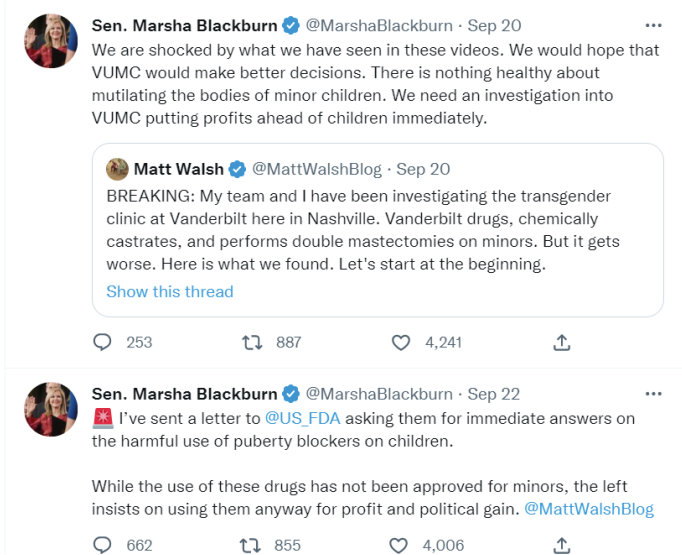


**Matt Walsh** ✓  
@MattWalshBlog



The governor of Tennessee is calling for an investigation into Vanderbilt after my report this afternoon. Legislators on the state and national level have also responded. We are not going to let up. We will shut this down.

9:37 PM · Sep 20, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone



- **On September 20**, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' spokesperson also applauded Matt Walsh for targeting Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, and said it was a "necessary first step to raise consciousness."
- **On September 23**—just a day after the political attacks on Vanderbilt—Texas Senator Ted Cruz retweeted one of Libs of TikTok's tweets about Dr. Gast at University of Wisconsin, echoing some of the most egregious lies about gender affirming care. Cruz previously called Libs of TikTok a "fabulous account" after they spread disinformation about Boston Children's Hospital.



- Politicians and candidates for the 2022 Midterms in multiple states, including Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, praised Libs of TikTok and repeated many of her claims, including introducing bills to ban gender-affirming care for minors, and incorporating her anti-trans messaging into their political platform. On August 19, Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene introduced a national bill that would "make it a felony to perform any gender affirming care on a minor"
- On September 3, failed Arizona gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake said her opponent was "actively encouraging performing double mastectomy, surgery and hysterectomy surgeries on our young girls. They are actively pushing to castrate our boys," and that she would ban those procedures in Arizona.



- On September 16, Florida Senator Marco Rubio issued a campaign ad, claiming the “radical left” will “indoctrinate children and try to turn boys into girls.”
- **On September 19**, American Principles Project started a \$450,000 ad campaign in support of Blake Masters, the Arizona GOP Senate candidate for the 2022 Midterms, that claimed Mark Kelly and Joe Biden were “pushing dangerous transgender drugs and surgeries on kids — taking away parental rights.”
- On September 23, Doug Mastriano, the 2022 failed gubernatorial candidate for Pennsylvania, announced his intention to introduce a statewide bill that would prohibit gender affirming surgeries for children—surgeries which are largely only done on those age 16 and older—claiming he “can’t stand by as medical providers across the country cave to the pressures of militant leftists committed to distorting the concept of gender so that it defies the bounds of science and logic. Mastriano later accused Children’s Hospital Of Philadelphia of kidnapping homeless transgender youth to perform gender experiments on them.

### **STAGE 5: GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE AND RESOURCES ARE HALTED OR REMOVED AND, IN SOME INSTANCES, HEALTH CARE IS DISRUPTED FOR ALL PATIENTS**

*In the fifth and final stage, hospitals are forced to halt gender-affirming services or remove online resources and websites in order to protect the safety of their patients and staff.*

The aim of these harassment campaigns has been to block access to gender-affirming care and resources for transgender and non-binary youth and their families. In doing so, they have risked the health, safety, and well-being of not only trans youth and their families, but also all other children and families attending the same clinics and hospitals. As of October 3, all but three of the at least 20 children’s hospitals which have been targeted by right wing campaigns have had to modify the information publicly available on gender affirming care services they offer, including removing or altering websites, informative resources, and contact information for clinics and providers. For example,

- On August 30th, Boston Children’s Hospital had to temporarily lock down their entire hospital for 90 minutes, leaving patients’ families stranded outside, after receiving a bomb threat, two weeks after an online harassment campaign began against them. At the time of the threat, federal agents were already “moderating threats made against [the hospital] and its employees” following a campaign of harassment initiated by Libs of TikTok.
  - On September 9th, a second bomb threat was called in, while on November 16, a third bomb threat from a person claiming bombs were placed in both the Gender Multispecialty Service (GeMS) transgender health clinic and the homes of three doctors, once again forced BCH again into lockdown and partial evacuation.
- Vanderbilt University Transgender Health Clinic had to temporarily shut down their websites, and move all in-person appointments to telehealth within 24 hours of Matt Walsh’s Tweet. Vanderbilt University Transgender Health Clinic had to temporarily shut down their websites, and move all in-person appointments to telehealth within 24 hours of Matt Walsh’s Tweet.
- The University of Wisconsin was forced to temporarily shut down and password protect their websites, within days of being inundated with attacks.
- In Chicago, Lurie Children’s Hospital was forced to cancel transgender youth support groups, and then move them online, after the hospital and its providers began receiving online threats and harassment following Tweets from Libs of TikTok and other right-wing allies.



- On September 26, Republican Rep. Nancy Mace accused her opponent, Democrat Dr. Annie Andrews, of “child abuse” for supporting “gender affirming therapy.” As a result of these attacks, Dr. Andrews was forced to take immediate unpaid leave from MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children’s Hospital in order to protect herself and her colleagues, risking disruption to her patients’ care.

It has not just been gender-affirming care that has been interrupted: When hospitals are forced to go into lockdown and hire extra security, it impacts access to care for all children and their families.

- As noted in the letter sent to the DOJ “In one hospital, a new mother was prevented from being with her preterm infant because the hospital’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit was on lockdown due to a bomb threat.”
- On September 28, The University of Oklahoma - the only hospital in the state that offered gender affirming care to transgender and non-binary youth - was pressured into halting some gender-affirming care services, after the governor and state legislature threatened to withhold federal Covid relief funds for all services in the entire hospital if they did not cease providing it. Had the hospital refused, they would have lost over \$108 million in funds to cover “cancer care, pediatric behavioral health care and other infrastructure.”
  - This bill was authorized in a special session of the state legislature, just two weeks after UnWokablePod tweeted about University of Oklahoma’s gender-affirming treatment services and was retweeted by Libs of TikTok.

### **THROUGHOUT IT ALL, SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES ALLOW THIS RHETORIC TO CONTINUE, AND SPREAD, UNMODERATED AND UNCHECKED.**

*All of these steps begin and continue as a result of social media companies allowing the rhetoric to spread, and remain, online — even when in violation of their own policies. Without intervention from social media companies, this will just lead to more hate speech, more threats, and more violence.*

Hate speech and harassment campaigns against pediatricians and children’s hospitals start online from a small number of ‘super-spreader’ instigator accounts, then grow exponentially as moderators refuse to remove even the most egregious of posts. As of this writing on November 8, 2022, all Tweets and Facebook posts included above remain live, despite all of them being in violation of Twitter and Meta’s policies on abusive behavior/targeted harassment and hateful conduct. Many are also in violation of both platforms’ much-publicized decision to ban the use of the vulgar term “groomer” - a slur which has recently seen a resurgence in an attempt to demonize LGBTQ+ people, culture and gender-affirming care.

**Libs of TikTok has received several temporary bans from Twitter and Facebook, but to little effect.** Facebook banned Libs of TikTok in August amidst their online attacks on Boston Children’s Hospital, but the account was reinstated almost immediately. Twitter issued a one-week ban of the account in late August after their attacks on BCS and Children’s National Hospital in DC — but left the account up in ‘read only mode’ rather than hide its Tweets. Once the account was restored, Raichik continued her attacks on gender-affirming care providers and children’s hospitals, leading to another temporary suspension in September. On her very first day back on Twitter after her second ban, she posted a thread attacking Barbara Bush Children’s Hospital in Maine for having a gender clinic for transgender youth, including calling out at least one provider by name.

And rather than apologize or revise her conduct or content, Raichik and the Libs of TikTok account have doubled down, reveling in the attention a temporary suspension brings, and vowing that “*No matter how many times they try censoring and silencing us, we’re never gonna stop the work we’ve started. We’re not going anywhere.*”



And with Elon Musk now in control of Twitter as of October 28, 2022, it is likely this will only get worse. Twitter's (now former) Head of Safety and Security admitted there was a "surge in hateful conduct" in the immediate aftermath of Musk assuming control. A recent study from Montclair State University confirmed this, finding that in just the first twelve hours after Musk took the reins, there were almost 5,000 hate speech filled Tweets — translating to almost 400 tweets an hour, about 5 times higher than the seven-day average in the week leading up to Musk's takeover. And one of Musk's first actions was to ask Twitter's content moderation team to "to review Twitter's hateful conduct policy, according to the people, specifically a section that says users can be penalized for 'targeted misgendering or deadnaming of transgender individual'" — a response met with taunting Tweets celebrating this change from both Matt Walsh and Libs of TikTok. Since then, the majority of Twitter executives have quit, Twitter's content moderation team has been unable to effectively do their job, and Elon Musk has been unbanning hate accounts, including two which were initially banned for their anti-transgender hate speech.

## **CONCLUSION**

The five points of this cycle illustrate the insidious strategy used by right-wing extremists to spread fear and create hate by any means available to them. Accounts like Libs of TikTok engage in stochastic terrorism, waging violent hate and harassment campaigns, spreading lies, disinformation, and violence, while ignoring science, medicine, and research. They sit safely behind their keyboards while transgender and non-binary people must live with the consequences of their violent rhetoric, and medical providers live in fear for the "crime" of supporting transgender and gender non-conforming people. We already know what this story looks like - we've seen it in attacks on abortion clinics including bombings, arson and murders. We've seen it in Pizzagate, in QAnon, and in the election denialism that led to the January 6th attacks.

Social media companies have a responsibility to act and to not be bystanders while angry mobs intimidate LGBTQ+ people and our allies into silence. But given their reticence to act—and, in the case of Twitter, the dangerous overtuning of policies designed to prevent hate and disinformation on the platform—responsibility has to expand beyond social media companies. Elected leaders need to forcefully speak out against anti-LGBTQ+ violence and hate speech, less the political conversation be dominated by those who seek to stoke and encourage these campaigns of harassment and violence against young people, their families, doctors and hospitals. The DOJ needs to follow through on the request from medical associations to act swiftly and "investigate the organizations, individuals, and entities coordinating, provoking, and carrying out bomb threats and threats of personal violence." LGBTQ+ allies need to call out disinformation and hate speech when they encounter it both online and offline, including speaking up in support of gender affirming care providers and hospitals, so doctors know there are people out there in their communities who stand in solidarity with them — not just people seeking to harm them.

We can all imagine a better future — one where truth is valued more than the loudest voice in the room. But now we all must act to make that vision a reality.

[hrc.im/OnlineHateReport](https://hrc.im/OnlineHateReport)

[Appendix](#)





HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION

## **CALLS TO ACTION**

- **Watch HRC's [video](#)**
  
- **Learn more our gender-affirming care in the Human Rights Campaign's [gender-affirming care fact sheet](#), [explainer](#), or [gender-affirming care explainer video](#).**
  
- **Read recent research on the spread of online hate speech and offline violence against the LGBTQ+ community, including**
  - A. The Human Rights Campaign and CCDH's report "[Digital Hate: Social Media's Role in Amplifying Dangerous Lies About LGBTQ+ People](#)."
  - B. GLAAD's report on [protests and "significant threats" drag events](#) faced in 2022
  - C. CCDH's report "[The Musk Bump: Quantifying the rise in hate speech under Elon Musk](#)."
  
- **Social media users should counteract online hate speech and harassing or violent content**
  - A. Report harassing and abusive posts.
  - B. Elevate and share posts from gender-affirming care experts, and transgender advocates and allies.
  - C. Speak out and post messages of support and solidarity for gender-affirming care providers
  - D. Share accurate information and educate others about gender-affirming care, to counteract the spread of misinformation and lies
  - E. For more tips, review the United Nations' guide, "[Engage—how to deal with hate speech?](#)", or the CCDH report "[Don't Feed the Trolls How to Deal with Hate on Social Media](#)."