

Initiative 110: Prohibit Gender Affirming Surgery for Minors

Placed on the ballot by citizen initiative • Passes with a majority vote

Initiative 110 proposes amending the Colorado statutes to:

- prohibit surgeries on minors that alter their biological sex characteristics as a treatment for the perception of their sex or gender (gender affirming surgeries); and
- prohibit the use of state or federal funds or insurance coverage to pay for these surgeries.

What Your Vote Means

YES

A “yes” vote on Initiative 110 prohibits gender affirming surgeries on minors and the use of government funds or health insurance to pay for the surgeries.

NO

A “no” vote on Initiative 110 maintains Colorado law, which does not restrict gender affirming surgeries for minors and allows public and private health insurance programs to pay for these treatments.

Summary and Analysis of Initiative 110

What medical treatments are prohibited by Initiative 110?

Gender-affirming surgeries include a range of procedures to make a person’s physical appearance match their gender identity, such as altering, removing, or reconstructing sexual and reproductive organs, modifying the shape of a person’s body, changing their facial appearance, or altering their vocal characteristics. Initiative 110 prohibits gender-affirming surgeries on minors. Non-surgical gender-related treatments such as puberty blocking medications, social transition options, and counseling are not restricted by the measure.

Initiative 110 allows surgeries to treat minors born with a medically verifiable disorder of sex development or an acquired physical or chemical abnormality, as well as male circumcision.

How often are these procedures performed on minors in the United States?

Gender-affirming surgery is rare among minors in the United States, according to a study by researchers at Harvard University, which examined 2019 health insurance claim data. For every 100,000 youths aged 15 to 17, it is estimated that 2.1 youths had at least one gender-affirming surgery. For youths aged 13 to 14, surgeries are even more rare, with 0.1 youths having a surgery per 100,000 youths (or 1 in a million). Researchers found no cases of gender-affirming surgeries being performed on youths aged 12 and younger. The study reports that the most common procedures were chest-related.

The three large pediatric surgical providers in Colorado – Children’s Hospital Colorado, Rocky Mountain Children’s, and Denver Health – report that they do not perform gender-affirming surgeries on patients under 18 years of age.

Arguments For Initiative 110

- 1) Minors lack the maturity to make permanent, life-altering medical decisions. Like many other age-restricted rights and activities, gender-affirming surgeries should require a heightened level of maturity and informed consent that only becomes available over time. Until an individual is a legal adult, less invasive, non-surgical methods of providing gender-related care should be used.
- 2) There is not enough long-term data to determine whether gender-affirming surgery is a necessary treatment option prior to adulthood. Some minors may regret undergoing irreversible gender-affirming surgical procedures. Other states have limited gender-related treatment options due to uncertainty around the long-term effects on minors.

Arguments Against Initiative 110

- 1) Independent medical associations indicate that gender-affirming surgical care is a necessary treatment for some minors when clinical guidelines are met. This measure will unfairly delay necessary health care in those rare cases where surgery is the best treatment option. Rather than protecting youths, this measure seeks to politicize the health care decisions made between families and doctors and insert the government into personal health care issues.
- 2) Transgender youths already face stigmatization, harassment, and discrimination. Restricting gender-affirming surgical care for minors may worsen outcomes for some minors, such as anxiety, depression, social isolation, eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide.

Information about the organizations supporting and opposing this measure is available on the Colorado Secretary of State's website:

www.coloradosos.gov/pubs/elections/Initiatives/ballot/contacts/2026.html

Fiscal Impact of Initiative 110

The fiscal analysis will be included in the second draft.