



## State Agencies and Employees Exist to Serve all Texans, NOT for Governor Abbott's Political Stunts

**T**he recent announcement by Governor Abbott that the Department of Family and Protective Services will investigate healthcare for transgender children as child abuse is a disturbing addition to the list of recent politically motivated decisions regarding DFPS.

This decision, however, is singularly concerning. **Judy Lugo, President of the Texas State Employees Union -CWA Local 6186, stated,** “This decision is rooted in the deeply held discriminatory views against LGBTQ+ children and adults that the state’s leadership has repeatedly demonstrated in recent years.” With more than 40 proposed anti-trans bills, Texas has triple the number of bills targeting transgender youth than any other state in the country -from the notorious “Bathroom Bill” in 2017 to a bill restricting trans youth’s participation in sports in 2021.

**Lugo added,** “While he’s putting a target on some families with his new definition of abuse, Gov. Abbott is currently failing to respond to the year-long Children Without Placement (CWOP) crisis in the foster care system. Because of the steps taken by state leadership and their ongoing inaction, dozens of foster children across the state are still sleeping in motels, state offices, and apartments. In these unlicensed placements, untrained CPS staff have been given the impossible task of managing the complex medical, psychological, and behavioral needs of these children, in addition to their normal job duties. His priority needs to be on ending this crisis, not building his political resume.”

**Rick Levy, President of the Texas AFL-CIO stated,** “The only “abuse” taking place here is Gov. Greg Abbott and Attorney General Ken Paxton targeting and traumatizing transgender children, their families and the medical professionals who serve them. This latest stunt, targeting a dedicated state employee for helping a transgender child obtain medical care is despicable. The Texas AFL-CIO stands in full support of the family’s lawsuit and will continue to fight and organize for full inclusion and

*equal rights for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the workplace and in our state.”*

**Margaret Cook, CWA Public Sector Vice President stated,** “Foster children’s needs are not being met, and they are being exposed to more danger every day that they remain in these inappropriate settings. The impact of this crisis is not limited to foster children without placement. The endless extra shifts staff are required to work means children and families on staffs’ regular caseload are not getting the time and attention they need. More staff have decided to quit their jobs because of the impossible expectations and dangerous conditions in CWOP settings, which increases caseloads for staff who remain.”

The systemic failures in Texas’ foster care system are not new. While Attorney General, Gov. Abbott led the state’s defense of the foster care system in a federal class action lawsuit. Ultimately, a federal judge found that Texas was violating the constitutional rights of children in care. Now, Gov. Abbott has chosen to use DFPS as a prop for his political theater.

Press coverage revealed that in late 2021, following tweets from Gov. Abbott’s primary challenger, his office pressured DFPS to remove the Texas Youth Connection page from the DFPS website and remove two diversity training courses for staff. In addition to other resources for foster youth, the website provided suicide prevention resources to LGBTQ children in care. The longstanding trainings had been implemented to address the over-representation of Black and Hispanic families in the Texas foster care system.

**President Lugo further stated,** “State agencies have a responsibility to serve all Texans in all communities, not to be steered by the political whims of elected leaders looking to score points with their electoral base. The leadership of our state should be in the business of resolving crises experienced by children and families in Texas - not creating more crises by discriminating against kids and families seeking medical treatment that they deem appropriate and needed.”