

Ohio's transgender bathroom law goes into effect today. How will schools comply?

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Ohio K-12 schools and universities posted new bathroom signs and rescinded policies for transgender students to prepare for a new state law that took effect Tuesday.

Senate Bill 104, signed by Gov. Mike DeWine in November, prohibits transgender students from using facilities that align with their gender identity. Backers of the law contend it will protect children, but LGBTQ advocates say it further disenfranchises a vulnerable group of people.

"It makes students feel afraid and unsafe in a place where they previously felt a part of their school community," said Dara Adkison, executive director of TransOhio.

Ohio joins at least a dozen other states that restrict bathroom access for transgender people, according to the [Human Rights Campaign](#). No one has sued over the law yet, but attorneys with the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio are monitoring its implementation.

What is Ohio's transgender bathroom law?

Senate Bill 104 requires students at public and private schools to use bathrooms and locker rooms that match their sex assigned at birth. It also prevents transgender students from sharing overnight accommodations with peers of the same gender.

K-12 schools can't allow transgender students to use their preferred facilities, and colleges can't "knowingly" do so.

Schools and universities can still offer single-use bathrooms. The measure doesn't apply to school employees whose jobs require bathroom access, emergency situations, or people assisting young children or someone with a disability. It also doesn't include faculty bathrooms.

University of Cincinnati puts up new bathroom signs

The law doesn't say how schools should enforce their policies, leaving district and university officials to figure it out themselves.

"The bill doesn't have specific enforcement mechanisms or penalties spelled out within the language, so there's some question about what happens if a district doesn't comply with this," said Sara Clark, chief legal counsel for the Ohio School Boards Association.

The University of Cincinnati installed new signs in four residence halls and some locker rooms that say "biological men" and "biological women," a move that prompted backlash from students. The signs include a QR code that links to information about single-use restrooms on campus.

The updated signs are located in residence halls with multi-use bathrooms, and other housing won't be affected, according to the university. Spokesperson M.B. Reilly said staff will work to accommodate any transgender or non-binary students who wish to move.

"As a public institution, we are following the law and seeking to meet our mission to create an environment where we provide opportunity, develop educated and engaged citizens and enrich our city, state and world," Reilly said.

At Ohio State University, officials determined their facilities comply with the law and didn't make any changes. The campus has 450 single-occupancy restrooms, and multi-use student restrooms and locker rooms are already "designated by male or female biological sex," according to OSU's Facilities Operations and Development.

Columbus State Community College "continues to maintain a mix of single-gender, multi-occupancy restrooms and lockable single-occupancy restrooms," according to a spokesperson.

Ohio's K-12 school districts varied in their response to the new law.

Columbus City Schools recently rescinded a policy allowing transgender students to use their bathroom of choice. Upper Arlington Schools changed signs on all-gender restrooms to read "single occupancy." A Cincinnati Public Schools spokesperson said all schools have gender-neutral bathrooms available to students.

Mason City Schools spokesperson Tracey Carson said the district has a number of single-use restrooms in its buildings, adding: "We work closely with students and families to develop plans that support their safety and well-being while ensuring compliance with state law."

Cincinnati Enquirer reporter Madeline Mitchell contributed.