

Federal judge knocks down Florida's Medicaid ban on gender-affirming treatment

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — A federal judge struck down Florida's prohibition on Medicaid coverage for gender-affirming care, the second decision to upend restrictions put into place at the urging of Gov. Ron DeSantis.

U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle on Wednesday ruled against the ban by using some of the same conclusions and language that he used in another recent decision where he determined three Florida transgender minors could receive "puberty blockers" and other types of gender-affirming care despite a state-enacted prohibition on such treatment for those under the age of 18. In both rulings, Hinkle has stated that "gender identity is real. The record makes this clear."

This latest decision, however, is not just limited to those who brought a lawsuit against the state. It applies to the mammoth, multibillion-dollar safety net health care program that is paid for by a mix of state and federal tax dollars. Those who filed the initial legal challenge estimated that up to 9,000 Medicaid enrollees in Florida are transgender.

"There is no rational basis for a state to categorically ban these treatments or exclude them from the state's Medicaid coverage," stated Hinkle, who was first appointed to the court by former President Bill Clinton.

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