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The Trump administration wants homeless shelters to use physical characteristics like the 'presence of an Adam's apple' to identify and refuse shelter to transgender women

Rhea Mahbubani
15 hours ago



Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson speaks at Vaux Big Picture High School in

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Development would allow federally funded homeless shelters to take a person's "physical characteristics" into account when deciding if they should be housed among men or women.

HUD is working to reverse the Obama-era Equal Access Rule that provides housing to transgender people based on the gender identity with which they identify.

The rule's text, [first reported by Vox](#), says shelter staff can look for "factors such as height, the presence (but not the absence) of facial hair, the presence of an Adam's apple."

If a person's "biological sex" is not apparent based on observation, staff at women's-only shelters are allowed to ask for proof.

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A [proposed rule from the Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#) tells homeless shelters to use people's physical attributes — rather than their self-identified gender — to decide whether the homeless should be housed among men or women.

[Vox obtained a copy of the rule's text](#), which is part of HUD's effort to roll back the Obama-era Equal Access Rule that ensures transgender people are served based on their gender identities.

Now, the rule allows workers at federally funded homeless shelters to rely on "factors such as height, the presence (but not the absence) of



person's biological sex."

Staff members at women's shelters may determine whether to admit someone based on visual appearance, according to Vox. If the woman's gender is unclear based on her appearance, shelter workers are permitted to seek proof of her sex before granting her housing. People who are turned away may be forced to go to a men's shelter, according to Vox.

"Evidence requested must not be unduly intrusive of privacy, such as private physical anatomical evidence. Evidence requested could include government identification, but lack of government identification alone cannot be the sole basis for denying admittance on the basis of sex," the rule continues, per Vox.

Transgender people already face enormous barriers when trying to find a home. The [National Center for Transgender Equality](#) found that one in five trans people have faced discrimination when seeking housing, more than one in 10 have faced evictions, and [one in three](#) have been homeless.

"Discrimination and criminalization have left countless transgender people, particularly transgender people of color, exposed to violence and abuse, all while family rejection can leave transgender youth with nowhere to turn," Mara Keisling, the center's executive director, [said in a statement](#).

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In 2019, he claimed at an event that the agency "no longer seemed to know the difference between men and women," while describing trans women as "big, hairy men" who would try to "infiltrate" women's homeless shelters, [staffers told the Washington Post](#).

"Secretary Carson is contradicting the very mission of his department by trying to make shelters less safe for those who need them and further endangering the lives of marginalized people," Keisling said.

Read more:

[HUD Secretary Ben Carson ridiculed transgender women as 'big, hairy men' trying to infiltrate women's shelters, leaving staffers horrified](#)

[Trump administration revokes transgender health protection](#)

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