

Artists And Cultural Workers Against The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026

We, transgender people and allies of transgender people, who practice the arts and engage in cultural work, in the time of the state's legislative violence against the trans community, reject and strongly oppose the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2026. We view this Bill as a direct attack on the trans community's dignity, autonomy and human rights.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, that was introduced in the Lok Sabha on the 13th March 2026, has received unequivocal condemnation from various sections of the society including transgender communities and organisations. The Bill seeks to remove self-identification, exercise control over the diverseness of gender identities in this country and harmfully increases familial control over transgender persons.

Transgender people have been historically sidelined - from education, employment, social life, artistic spaces among countless others. The transgender community has in recent years with great effort articulated needs and demands as a people - horizontal reservations, strong trans rights, protection from violence and social security to name a few. The Bill does not have any provisions to fulfill these demands for social and economic justice. Instead, it makes it more difficult to access the few rights available and imposes a rigid narrow view of who and how we are and should be. It therefore, is an attempt to control diverse expressions of transgender people.

As artists, we know that expression is the basic premise of art. Historically, artists have served as commentators of culture, critics of injustice, and keepers and documentors of the diverse identities and expressions that exist in this world. We can't help but notice that this Bill, if passed in the Parliament will quell expressions of transgender artists and further restrict an already marginalized community from public life. Further, art has been one of the few fields available as a means of livelihood for many transgender artists, who are rejected by most professional spaces. By snatching away our artistic expression, this bill also does a grave injustice to our social and economic life.

Hence, we demand to immediately withdraw the Bill.

Protect care and solidarity networks

The bill introduces a new criminal provision in Section 18, for “alluring” or “deceiving” or “influencing” someone to become transgender. The provision could easily be misused to harass, target, and incarcerate individuals, communities, networks, and organisations, parents, and other supportive individuals and artists. Transgender artists also are care providers and community workers, in many instances at the centre of informal care networks. This bill strikes at the very heart of what we do and threatens transgender artists and artistic practices as we and our work can be easily accused as something that has “coerced” people into transness under “undue influence”. Historically, broad penalising laws like this one have always been brandished as weapons to harass, control and violate those most marginalised among us.

This Bill is reminiscent of the Criminal Tribes Act under the colonial era. We recognise this as part of the state’s push to incarcerate marginalized communities. This is a criminalization of all trans lives and lives connected to trans life.

Defend Self-Determination

The Bill seeks to amend the existing framework recognised under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. The removal of self determination is a direct attack at our very right to be. It takes away the rights under the Supreme Court’s historic NALSA judgement and violates our fundamental right to life.

This affects transgender artists because our art is often closely tied to our life and experiences as transgender individuals. This Bill is a direct affront to our right to define ourselves, to voice our truths and as a consequence, our artistic expression. The power of art lies in its ability to reflect on the status quo and imagine a new world better than what exists - it is this power that is threatened by the state today, simply because it cannot put in the work to understand it.

The mandate of medical certificates and bureaucratic scrutiny puts transgender people under risk of medical violence. Making our very identities dependent on external review and approval by people who cannot understand our stories leaves the door open to harassment, abuse and violence, already evident in our history, which is one of the reasons for the NALSA judgement.

Our demands

As artists, we find it necessary to demand that diversity of expressions is respected and our rights protected. We demand immediate withdrawal of the bill. We demand that all legislation about the community be made only in consultation with members of the community. We seek for such legislative action to reflect the legitimate concerns of our community, including social economic justice reform through actions like horizontal reservations, instead of the imagined fears and whims of officials.

We demand that the transgender community be given the same dignity as is given to every other citizen of this country, which is the most basic function of a state. We call for our fellow artists to engage in the fight against the bill using their artistic practices.

Sign the statement here if you are an artist or a cultural worker:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc3B2psujsB3nv6WDPux4b9NRNz9-8PWGOxENhWBJIrhAG3iA/viewform?usp=dialog>