



**An Open Letter to Trail Life USA Members and Friends Regarding  
the Boy Scouts of America Decision to Allow Transgendered Boys to Enroll in Scouting**

As I am sure you have heard, The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has taken another step in radically [changing its membership standards](#).

I want to accomplish two things with this letter. The first is to address concerns you might have about similar challenges that may come to Trail Life USA.

Many of you have expressed, privately and publicly, that Trail Life USA may also be subject to changing its [membership standards](#). I want to assure you that our bylaws and standards, having been forged in the fires of this cultural battle, are secure against such changes. Beyond that, we were birthed with the conviction that the principles resident in our [Statements of Faith and Values](#) are beyond debate, confirming the very reason for the strength of our grassroots growth.

It should be noted that the BSA decision was not driven by legal pressure. It was a voluntary departure from timeless values they once embraced. Three years old and twenty-six thousand strong in 48 states, we will not neglect the principles and truths that brought us here and promise our good future. To abandon this conviction is unthinkable.

The second thing I want to comment on is our posture in this contrary environment.

I recognize that many of you would prefer that we not address this issue at all. I understand that. In fact, if you look at our public communications over the past 2 years you will see very little reference to BSA and the events that launched our cause, except in response to media questions. My personal belief is that Trail Life USA has been in God's heart for a long time; the decisions made by BSA just moved us to action while that inciting influence faded.

While it may seem inappropriate to address these polarizing issues, speaking the truth in love—even in the shadow of certain criticism—is among the highest expressions of compassion.

We don't want boys psychologically, spiritually, and possibly physically scarred by the confusing message being presented by the BSA.

We don't want boys or girls subjected to compromising situations on outings in an environment where reasonable precautions are no longer enforceable.

We don't want churches drawn into dangerous legal territory and forced to embrace what they believe is sin because they have a formal alliance with an organization that has no such beliefs.

How cold and uncaring it would be for us to say nothing.

We will have the opportunity and, as led, the responsibility to speak in defense of a generation being led astray. While we will be kind in our words, we will not be weak.

Trailmen are the best men I know. And, in difficult times, it is always the best men who rise up to protect a generation.

Let's pray for discernment, season our words, and above all, remain committed to "... guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure."

In Him for generations,

Mark Hancock, CEO  
Trail Life USA