

Roberta DiMezza

From: Camille Chargois <cchargois11@gmail.com>
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To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: HB 6171 Testimony

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Dear Representatives,

In Rhode Island, infants and young children who are born with physical sex characteristics that vary from the “norm” (sometimes referred to as “intersex” or people with “differences of sex development”) are having life-altering medical decisions made without their consent. Unlike trans and gender nonconforming youth who are explicitly working with their medical providers for gender affirming care, intersex youth continue to be subjected to permanent, life-altering surgeries in order to make their bodies conform to social norms without an urgent medical reason to do so.

People born with variations in their sex characteristics are often subjected to invasive and risky procedures such as clitoral reductions and vaginoplasties in order to conform their genitalia to what is considered “acceptable.” Some also experience gonadectomies -- the removal of ovarian or testicular tissue -- sterilizing procedures that also create the need for lifelong hormone replacement. These surgeries are performed under the well-intentioned but misguided theory that these children will only be able to lead fulfilling and productive lives if their bodies are surgically forced into a certain category in infancy.

In fact, this patient population does not require surgery in order to lead happy, healthy lives, and there is no credible evidence to suggest that they do. These unwarranted interventions have been condemned by three former United States Surgeons General,¹ multiple arms of the United Nations,² Human Rights Watch,³ Physicians for Human Rights,⁴ GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality,⁵ the American Academy of Family Physicians,⁶ and every major intersex-led organization in the world.

By passing HB 6171, you have the power to protect bodily autonomy for, and reduce preventable harm done to, children born with variations in their physical sex characteristics. These children do not need to be “fixed” – but the widespread misunderstanding of their bodies does.

We support Rhode Island’s effort on this critical human rights issue and hope that you will, as well.

Regards,

Camille Chargois