

Honorable Members of the Rhode Island Legislature,

My name is Emory Hufbauer, I am an intersex individual, and I am writing to you in support of the passage of Senate Bill 225 which would protect children with variations in sex characteristics from nonconsensual surgeries in your state.

As a person who experienced multiple nonconsensual surgeries as an infant and young child -- the consequences of which I face to this day -- this is an issue to which I can speak personally. The procedures restricted by this bill are intimate and intense. Although I believe that all adults should have the right to complete medical self-determination, the standard must be full, unpressured, informed consent by the patient themselves, and children simply cannot grant that. Performing surgery on a young child is an act of trespass on their bodily freedom and autonomy which they will feel indelibly for the rest of their lives. When such operations are not absolutely necessary and urgent, they should be postponed until the child can give their full consent, as a teenager or young adult.

The relationship between a person's gender and their physical sex characteristics is close to the core of every person's being. Seeking surgical and hormonal therapies to align one's physical sex characteristics with one's gender and medical needs is a deeply personal and intimate choice, which should be made only with the greatest care. To demand that a young child make such a decision about their body is to put unthinkable pressure upon them; to change a child's body without their permission is an act of violence against them.

I have always known that I am different. I faced slander and hatred from a young age, as many children do, especially those whose sex and gender fall outside the binary norm. When I was told that what I needed was surgery, the thought did not give me hope; it made me feel deeper shame. When I awoke I did not feel relief; I felt immense pain. The way to protect intersex children from the cruelties of the world is the same as it is for any child: it is to teach them to love and respect themselves, to seek help from those they can trust, to defend themselves in time of need; it is not to subject them to surgery.

Sincerely,

-Emory Hufbauer

*Emory Hufbauer*

**Appendix:** When a young person with an outwardly binary-conforming body comes forward and asks for treatment with surgery and hormones to confirm their gender identity, they have already traversed an incredible array of barriers to ask for help -- their free will is plainly evident in their choice to speak up, even in the face of the enormous pressure society puts on them to conform. But for intersex children whose bodies diverge from the binary, that same pressure all too often pushes them the other way: to make a permanent decision to conform before they are ready, regardless of their own needs. This pressure is sociological in nature; it comes from all directions without any single source -- from a child's doctors, parents, teachers, and peers; it is the conformist instinct of our species. Until we live in a kinder world, intersex children can never be fully shielded from that pressure, and there are those who would use it to manipulate them into granting false consent. This is why the age requirement is so crucial to this bill -- it is only with their own wisdom that an intersex person can hope to stand against such uncertainty and hardship to make the right decision for themselves.