

Roberta DiMezza

From: Julie Greenberg <julieg121451@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 9, 2021 8:29 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: HB 6171 - Letter of Support

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Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Julie Greenberg. I am a retired law professor who for more than 20 years has published numerous articles and an award winning book on the legal and human rights issues affecting children born with intersex traits. Therefore, I am very familiar with the issues raised by this bill.

I am writing in support of HB 6171, which will prohibit specified surgeries on children born with variations in their physical sex characteristics who are under 12 years old unless required to address an immediate risk of physical harm. Surgeries should not be performed on infants to conform their bodies to stereotypical notions of male or female. The risks associated with these surgeries are profound.

The practice of surgically erasing variations in children's sex characteristics without centering the input of the individual involved has been condemned by all major community-led groups as well as the World Health Organization, Physicians for Human Rights, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and multiple United Nations committees. Allowing this practice to continue in Rhode Island violates the fundamental human rights of these infants. These surgeries undermine the child's right to bodily autonomy and self-determination, cause needless physical and psychological harm, and discriminate against individuals whose bodies may not fit narrow sex stereotypes. By prohibiting these surgeries, which need not be performed in childhood, HB 6171 buys time for children born with variations in their physical sex characteristics to participate in personal, life-altering decisions about their bodies.

I hope that the Rhode Island legislature recognizes that these vulnerable children need its protection. Without this legislation, children in Rhode Island will continue to be subjected to these human rights violations.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Greenberg
Emeritus Professor of Law
Thomas Jefferson School of Law