



RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY

April 13, 2021

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Committee on Judiciary
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Craven:

re: 21H-6171
Representative Kislak

In Rhode Island, the physicians who take care of intersex patients appreciate and celebrate the diversity of sexual characteristics, the complicated relationship between sex and gender, and the complex physical, social and cultural sources of gender identity. Given intersex diagnoses are rare, with an estimated prevalence of about 0.018% of the world's population,ⁱ we recognize that these patients need and deserve highly individualized care. Because of this, we approach these patients in a multidisciplinary fashion. Most members of the team at Hasbro Children's Hospital are not surgeons, but include endocrinologists, geneticists, pediatricians, ethicists, social workers and psychologists.

We advocate that all treatment options be available for children, including surgery when appropriate. We are for maintaining the individuality of patient care and allowing parents to make the best decisions for their children with appropriate counseling on all options. If surgery is presented as an option, the goal of surgery is to restore and maintain function of existing anatomy; it is not sex assignment. Based on the current intersex guidelines, surgery is often delayed, when safe.

We recognize that this approach was not always standard of care. In fact, as late as the 1980's physicians approached these patients based on theories that have been proven to be wrong. Fortunately, there have been radical changes in how we care for these patients. We, of course, are always open to and look forward to continued improvement based on future medical research.

Instead of legislation, we propose the construction of a more inclusive multidisciplinary intersex board consisting of medical professionals and intersex community members. The charge of this board would be to set local guidelines of care, review specific patients, and make recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catherine A. Cummings, MD
President
Rhode Island Medical Society

ⁱ Sax L. How common is Intersex? A response to Anne Fausto-Sterling. *Journal of Sex Research* 2002;39:174–8. doi:10.1080/00224490209552139.