



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth Celebrates
Intersex Awareness Day on 10/26 with Unprecedented Visibility,
Momentum, and 2020 Legislation in Two U.S. States***

SUDBURY, MA—Children born with natural variations in their physical sex characteristics continue to suffer brutalizing and traumatic surgeries performed without their consent in hospitals across the United States. Some doctors still believe, absent medical evidence, that it is acceptable to permanently change the genitalia and other sex traits of intersex minors by recommending unnecessary interventions to parents.

Intersex children are subjected to surgeries—such as “reducing” a large clitoris, moving a working urethra, or deepening a short vagina—not because of a medical need, but because they are seen as broken by medical professionals who have not yet accepted this type of natural human variation. Categorically, surgeries performed on intersex children aim to conform healthy bodies to outdated ideas about what a “male” or “female” person is supposed to look like. The procedures have been deemed a form of torture by the United Nations and are condemned by Physicians for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, the ACLU, PFLAG, the Trevor Project, GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality, and the American Academy of Family Physicians, among others.

Every intersex-led organization in the world opposes non-lifesaving surgical intervention on the sex traits of intersex children without individual consent. This October 26th, in recognition of the 23rd anniversary of Intersex Awareness Day—the first time intersex individuals in the U.S. gathered to protest being denied their bodily autonomy—interACT joins the Intersex Justice Project, the Houston Intersex Society, InterConnect, and Intersex & Faith, in making the following recommendations to medical professionals:

We, the intersex-led organizations in the US, recommend:

- 1. The provision of intersex-affirming medical and mental health care that destigmatizes and depathologizes variations in sex characteristics;*
- 2. The application of expertise and principles of transgender care, including psychosocial support honoring the diversity of thriving lived experience regarding sex and gender;*
- 3. The preservation of an intersex child's open future through deferral of all non-emergent medical procedures.*

These recommendations are inspired by an unprecedented year of intersex visibility and a growing consensus that action must be taken to ensure intersex young people can live free from medical erasure. Intersex issues were featured in [CNN](#), [NBC](#), [The New York Times](#), [The Guardian](#), [The L.A. Times](#), [The BBC](#), and many others. interACT Youth advocates released a groundbreaking [social media toolkit](#), opening up on their experiences with bodily differences and unwanted surgery.

interACT will continue to honor these young voices by spearheading two state-wide bills to protect intersex bodily autonomy in 2020: in New York, soon to be filed bill by Senator Brad Hoylman, and in California, SB 201, introduced by Senator Scott Wiener. An additional bill in New York City, a first-of-its-kind initiative introduced by City Council Member Daniel Dromm, will enable the NYC Department of Health to undertake a city-wide public information and outreach campaign to address the needs of intersex people. This year, at least 70 million individuals will have pending legislation in their jurisdiction to protect intersex human rights.

“It’s important that intersex individuals are given bodily autonomy from the moment they are born. We need to change the system and provide both parents and medical professionals the necessary resources and training on intersex people,” said **Maria Tridas, an intersex New Yorker and interACT Youth member.**

“Building on advocacy efforts over the last two decades, our intersex community is more united than ever in our resolve to end the human rights abuses faced by intersex youth,” said **Kimberly Zieselman, interACT Executive Director.** “We must have control over our own bodies in order to live healthy lives.”

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***interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth** is an intersex-led nonprofit dedicated to advancing the legal and human rights of children born with intersex traits. Founded in 2006, interACT oversees the largest youth-led intersex advocacy group in the world, brought the first successful piece of state legislation to address intersex human rights abuses, and regularly advises public and private entities on how best to support the needs of intersex youth and end unwanted childhood surgeries. For an ally guide of 101 materials, visit www.4intersex.org.*