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**Boston Children’s Hospital To Protect Intersex Children in Historic  
Moratorium on Non-consensual Infant Clitoral Reductions,  
Vaginoplasties**

*Days before Intersex Awareness Day, interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth celebrates the second U.S. hospital to commit to ending the practice of “normalizing” surgery on intersex infants.*

**BOSTON, MA** — Today, one of the East Coast’s preeminent children’s hospitals issued a moratorium on the practice of “normalizing” surgeries performed on intersex infants prior to their ability to provide informed consent. Infants born with visibly apparent variations in their physical sex characteristics (approximately 1 in 2000 live births) continue to be subjected to emotionally and physically damaging surgeries across the country, including previously at Boston Children’s, despite years of advocacy by intersex activists. The Massachusetts-based group [interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth](http://interactadvocates.org), the largest intersex-led advocacy organization in the world, celebrates this groundbreaking step forward in patient-centered care. Boston Children’s is now at the forefront of excellence in the provision of affirming care for LGBTQI youth.

The [United Nations](#), [Physicians for Human Rights](#), the [European Parliament](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and all major intersex-led groups have urged policymakers to address this issue and protect people from these harmful interventions when performed without the consent of the individual. This is the first time an East Coast hospital has directly addressed the human rights violations facing people born with variations in bodily sex characteristics — such as genitalia, reproductive organs, and chromosomes — sometimes referred to as “intersex traits.”

This step is the culmination of decades of advocacy by the intersex community. On October 26th, 1996, intersex activists gathered in Boston to protest the ongoing human rights abuses facing intersex children and the inaction of the American Academy of Pediatrics. [Intersex Awareness Day](#) was established to commemorate this first major public demonstration and highlight ongoing harm suffered by the community. Following on the heels of this summer’s historic win by the Intersex Justice Project after

Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago [committed to readdressing their approach to surgery](#), this move was also precipitated by a forceful [position statement](#) by the Massachusetts Medical Society in 2019 calling upon those in the medical field to defer medical or surgical intervention until the child is able to participate in decision-making. Boston Children's has issued a statement unequivocally recognizing what advocates have sought for decades: *"we will not perform clitoroplasty or vaginoplasty in patients who are too young to participate in a meaningful discussion of the implications of these surgeries, unless anatomical differences threaten the physical health of the child."*

"As an intersex woman who was raised in Massachusetts, I am proud that BCH finally recognized the dignity of intersex people. We must be able to live free from the threat of non-consensual medical interventions based on discrimination and fear of differences in sex anatomy," said **Kimberly Zieselman, Executive Director of interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth**, who herself worked in government relations for Boston Children's prior to learning of her own concealed intersex diagnosis and non-consensual childhood surgeries.

Unlike Lurie's earlier statement, the new Boston Children's policy does not exclude children with one of the most common intersex variations, Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH). Attempting to cabin protections based on diagnostic labels has been recognized by community advocates as an abusive bid to continue performing medically unnecessary genital surgeries on one of the largest groups of children with such variations—and evidence indicates up to 12% of children with CAH may grow up to reject the female sex assignment enforced by these irreversible surgeries. As Boston Children's Hospital recognizes, children with CAH deserve the same opportunities as children with other intersex variations to make these life-altering decisions for themselves.

This policy represents a step forward not just for BCH as an institution, but for generations of vulnerable youth. Unfortunately, advocates warn that children who will be protected under this new policy may be referred for surgery to a provider in New York who has been identified in the press previously as a perpetrator of childhood sexual abuse. Dix P. Poppas, Chief of Pediatric Urology at Weill-Cornell/New York Presbyterian, has [come under fire](#) in the past not only for his performance of clitoral reduction surgeries on intersex children, but also for his follow-up ["sensitivity testing"](#) that involved applying a medical vibratory device to the surgically reduced clitorises of children as young as 6. Despite this shocking practice, he continues to operate on his own patients, and may now begin operating on BCH's patients as well.

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**InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth** is the largest organization in the world dedicated to policy advocacy on behalf of intersex youth. Committed to ending stigma against intersex people in media, law, and policy, interACT partners with organizations and thought leaders across the country to raise up the voice of this vulnerable population. Learn more or donate to our work at <https://interactadvocates.org/>