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**New York City’s Highest Ranking Health Official
Condemns Surgeries to “Normalize” Intersex Traits Before Individual Consent**

(New York, NY) — Dr. Oxiris Barbot, the highest ranking member of New York City’s Department of Health and a pediatrician, alongside Carmelyn Malalis, the Commissioner of New York City’s Commission on Human Rights and an attorney, released [an editorial condemning the practice of infant intersex surgery](#) this morning.

About 1.7% of babies are born intersex, with natural differences in their sex anatomy. Some of these differences include genital variations that have resulted in the harmful practice of “correcting” healthy tissue for no medical purpose—such as surgically reducing the size of a larger-than-average clitoris—quickly after birth and before the individual can make their own decisions. These interventions, which often lead to lifelong negative physical and mental impacts, have been condemned by every single human rights organization to have considered the issue. Commissioner Barbot, in her time as a practicing pediatrician, personally witnessed the pain and trauma caused by a nonconsensual surgery.

Acknowledging that “decisions made by adults out of ignorance and fear can leave lifelong physical and mental scars,” Commissioners Barbot and Malalis explain that “progress is being made with a growing consensus among medical providers to defer surgical interventions until a child is able to have a voice in the process... Now is the time for doctors to respect the rights of intersex people, use compassionate care with children, and only perform surgery when the health of a child is at imminent risk or it is consensual.”

The Commissioners’ statement is the first from the head of a U.S. state’s health authority. 2019 represents a pivotal year for intersex human rights globally, with numerous authorities voicing support for intersex bodily autonomy. In 2019 alone, Canada, Britain, Kenya, Australia’s Tasmania, and India’s Tamil Nadu have all called for a delay of surgical procedures for individual consent. The European Parliament adopted a resolution affirming intersex bodily autonomy in February. In the United States, interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth works to encourage U.S. entities to follow suit. California’s pending bill, SB 201, sponsored by interACT, Scott Wiener, Equality California, and the ACLU, would be the country’s first state-level enforcement legislation.

“It’s heartening to see New York City emerging as a much needed leader in protecting children with intersex traits from the life-long harmful impact of unnecessary medical interventions. Intersex bodies are simply healthy and natural variations, and should never be altered for cosmetic reasons without the informed consent of the person themselves,” said **Kimberly Zieselman**, Executive Director of interACT, herself an intersex woman.

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Through law and policy, media, and youth leadership programs, [interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth](#) leads national conversations on intersex issues. Find educational information and legislative updates at [4intersex.org](#).