



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Senator Brad Hoylman Announces New Legislation To Protect The Rights Of Intersex New Yorkers

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL November 8, 2019

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New Legislation Will Allow Intersex Minors To Make Decisions About Their Own Futures And Prohibit Cruel, Unnecessary Surgeries That Are Often Performed At Birth

November 8th Is Intersex Day Of Solidarity, The Culmination Of A Global Week Of Advocacy From The Intersex Community

NEW YORK--Today, State Senator Brad Hoylman (D/WF-Manhattan) announced plans to introduce new legislation to protect the rights of intersex New Yorkers. The announcement comes on November 8th, globally recognized as Intersex Day of Solidarity. Senator Hoylman's bill would require the informed consent of an intersex minor before a medical professional can perform a non-medically necessary treatment or intervention on the minor's sex characteristics.

Senator Hoylman said: "Experts estimate there are more than 140,000 New Yorkers with intersex traits—they deserve autonomy over their bodies. Yet many intersex people are forced to undergo unnecessary and irreversible surgeries that can cause physical pain and emotional distress. To craft this legislation, I've listened closely to the intersex community—including the wonderful advocates at interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth—and learned about the unique experience they face. I am confident this bill is a safe,

responsible way to protect the rights of all intersex New Yorkers.”

Kimberly Zieselman, interACT Executive Director and an intersex woman herself said:

“Vulnerable children are suffering across New York because a subset of the medical community refuses to respect intersex voices and recognize what we have known for decades: there is nothing shameful about natural variations in sex characteristics. Genital normalizing surgeries such as clitoral 'reductions' and vaginoplasties instill deep shame and sexual trauma in young children when they cannot make a decision for themselves. That these abuses of intersex youth continue after decades of advocacy proves the intensity of the shame and anti-LGBTQ bias at play. We are so grateful to Senator Hoylman for bringing New York to the right side of history.”

Senator Hoylman’s bill, which will be introduced ahead of the 2020 legislative session, requires the informed consent of an intersex minor before a doctor performs surgery on the basis of the minor’s sex characteristics. This would allow intersex children to avoid medically unnecessary procedures and decide whether a certain surgery is right for them. Intersex advocates and legislators have been pushing for similar legislation in other states, including Senator Scott Weiner’s SB201 in California.

Thousands of children in New York are born with a range of characteristics that may not conform with traditional expectations for male or female bodies, such as variations in chromosomes, genitals or internal sex organs. Doctors regularly attempt to “fix” intersex traits in children through surgeries like clitoral reductions, vaginoplasties, and sterilizations, even though these surgical interventions are not medically necessary in that moment.

Because these unnecessary surgeries for intersex youth can cause physical pain, loss of sensitivity, scarring, sterilization and psychological consequences, a broad coalition of medical experts—including the United Nations, Physicians for Human Rights, and the World Health Organization—consider involuntary so-called “corrective” surgeries on intersex youth

to be human rights abuses.