

# Human Rights Watch

## Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/01/calling-california-respect-intersex-children>

## Campaign and Advocacy

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Surgeons Opposition to Senate Resolution Exposes Persistent Stigmatization

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I [testified](#) before Californias senate judiciary committee today to support Senate Concurrent Resolution 110, which supports the autonomy of intersex Californians to decide if and when their bodies get surgically altered. The resolution, authored by Senator Scott Wiener and co-sponsored by interACT Advocates for Intersex Youth and Equality California, says the medical community should establish long-overdue evidence- and rights-based standards of care for children born with atypical sex characteristics.

Intersex children born with chromosomes, gonads, internal or external sex organs that dont match typical social expectations of male or female are born perfectly healthy in most cases. However, since the 1960s, doctors in the US and around the world have routinely performed surgery to normalize their bodies, long before they are old enough to decide for themselves whether they want these procedures. The surgery is medically unnecessary, irreversible, often traumatizing, and carries a risk of lifelong harm.

While some surgical intervention is undisputedly medically necessary, some surgeons perform risky cosmetic surgery on intersex children, often before they are even able to talk. The results are often catastrophic and the supposed benefits largely unproven.

[Resolution 110](#) in no way seeks to interfere with legitimate medical practice, but rather to protect children born with variations of sex characteristics from nonconsensual, medically unnecessary surgeries.

Nonetheless, some medical professional associations oppose intersex childrens rights. Some surgeons have proposed deeply problematic amendments to this resolution. These convey the idea that the thousands of intersex children across the state cannot be functioning members of society without cosmetic surgery.

To quote these proposed edits: It should be considered negligent to not offer to parents all options including...surgical reconstruction of their child...as the inherent desire of any responsible parent is that their child be raised as a functioning member of society.

As I told the senators today, the implicit idea that surgery is often necessary in order for intersex people to be functioning members of society has no factual or scientific basis, and most of the doctors Ive interviewed on this issue would find it objectionable.

Medically unnecessary surgery on intersex children has been condemned by the [World Health Organization](#), the [American Medical Association board of trustees](#), three former [US surgeons-general](#), [Physicians for Human Rights](#), the [AIS-DSD Support Group](#), [Amnesty International](#), [United Nations experts](#), [Lambda Legal](#), the [ACLU](#), [pediatrics professional bodies](#), and [intersex-led organizations](#) worldwide.

California should join these ranks.

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