

Legislative Toolkit

Create change in your state



Getting started

Using this toolkit

Across the country, intersex people and allies are calling on legislators in their states to end non-consensual surgeries on intersex youth.

In this toolkit, you'll find everything you need to join them: sample legislation, handouts you can share in meetings, talking points, and information on how the legislative process works.

At interACT, we know that organizing takes a team. Reach out to others in your community and ask them to join you.

Not sure how to get started? Contact: info@interACTadvocates.org



"It's not an issue that many people have heard about...but when I share my story, people understand that this is a real human rights issue, and that we have to act."

Mari Wrobi, Intersex Advocate





Legislative process

Explanation & strategy

Partnering with local organizations

Look for organizations in your city and state that you can partner with, whether they're focused on intersex rights or LGBTQIA+ rights more broadly. It's crucial to have people to bounce around ideas and divide up the work with. They may have existing relationships with legislators, other groups that might be helpful, the press, or community validators.

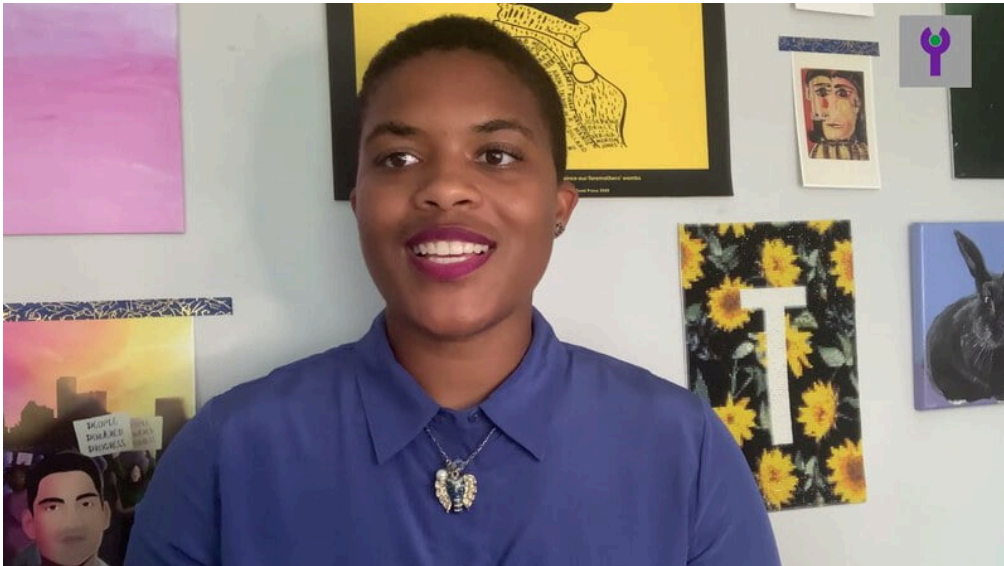


Finding sponsors

Every bill needs a sponsor to introduce it. This legislator will be your strongest advocate within the legislative system: they'll get others on board and shepherd the bill through the process. Start by looking up your local legislators [here](#). You can also research legislators who have been supportive of LGBTQIA+ causes and contact their offices to schedule meetings with them or their staff.

The more you're able to do for the legislator's impact and legacy (by providing press opportunities or the support of an active and vocal community, for example), the more likely they are to say "yes." Be sure to follow up because they will have a lot going on. Research other legislators who may be interested and meet with them too. The more sponsors and co-sponsors you have, the more people there are to push the bill through and divide up the work.





Making it through committee

Once the bill is introduced, it will be sent to the relevant committee for consideration. Ask your sponsor how the hearing will be scheduled: you may need to do outreach to committee members to get your bill on the agenda. It's also important to meet with committee members ahead of the hearing to ensure they have the facts.

At hearings, committee members listen to testimony and ask questions. You'll work with the sponsor to select some witnesses to testify. Focus on witnesses who can address the issue from different angles: intersex people, supportive families, and medical professionals, for example.



Work with everyone to ensure they are touching on different points while staying on message—and staying within time limits. Think about how you want your team's testimony to respond to the testimony of witnesses against the bill.

The committee will then decide whether to send the bill for further **study**, **vote it down**, or **advance** it to another committee or to a floor vote.

Signing the bill into law

Remember, the bill must pass both houses of the legislature and be signed by the governor to become law. After passing the first house, you'll want to work with your sponsor to do the same kind of outreach on the other side, and with the community to get people to contact their representatives. Resolutions may have similar or different processes, so make sure to look those up as well if you are introducing a resolution. It's also important to do the same outreach to the governor's office.

Working with press

Press is key, especially during and after any hearings. Work with the sponsor to send out press releases. Ask if there are reporters that supportive legislators have good relationships with. Look for reporters who cover LGBTQIA+ issues well, and send them our [media guide](#). Remember, everyone has to work together to stay on message, so it's important to prepare and practice.

Op-eds are a great way to show the impact of the bill. You can write and publish multiple op-eds to highlight the same angles that the testimony highlighted. You can also coordinate to amplify the issue on social media, like by live-tweeting the hearing.

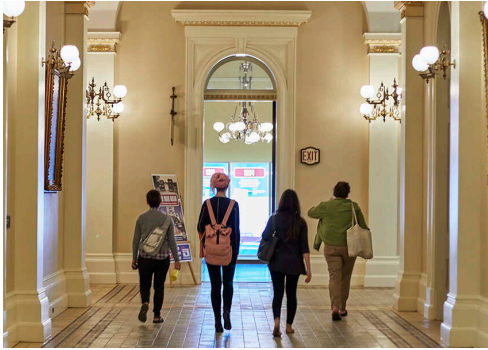
Find an example of a recent op-ed [here](#).



Materials for meeting with legislators

Sample legislation & handout

interACT's Work



Sample Enforcement Bill

This bill amends the state's regulation of professional conduct to make providers who perform non-consensual surgeries on intersex youth subject to state medical board disciplinary action. Find it [here](#).



Sample Resolution

Legislatures use resolutions to uplift causes and values. This resolution highlights the discrimination faced by intersex people, affirms the legislature's support for intersex people, and calls on the health care profession to end non-consensual surgeries on intersex youth. Find it [here](#).



Sample Education Bill

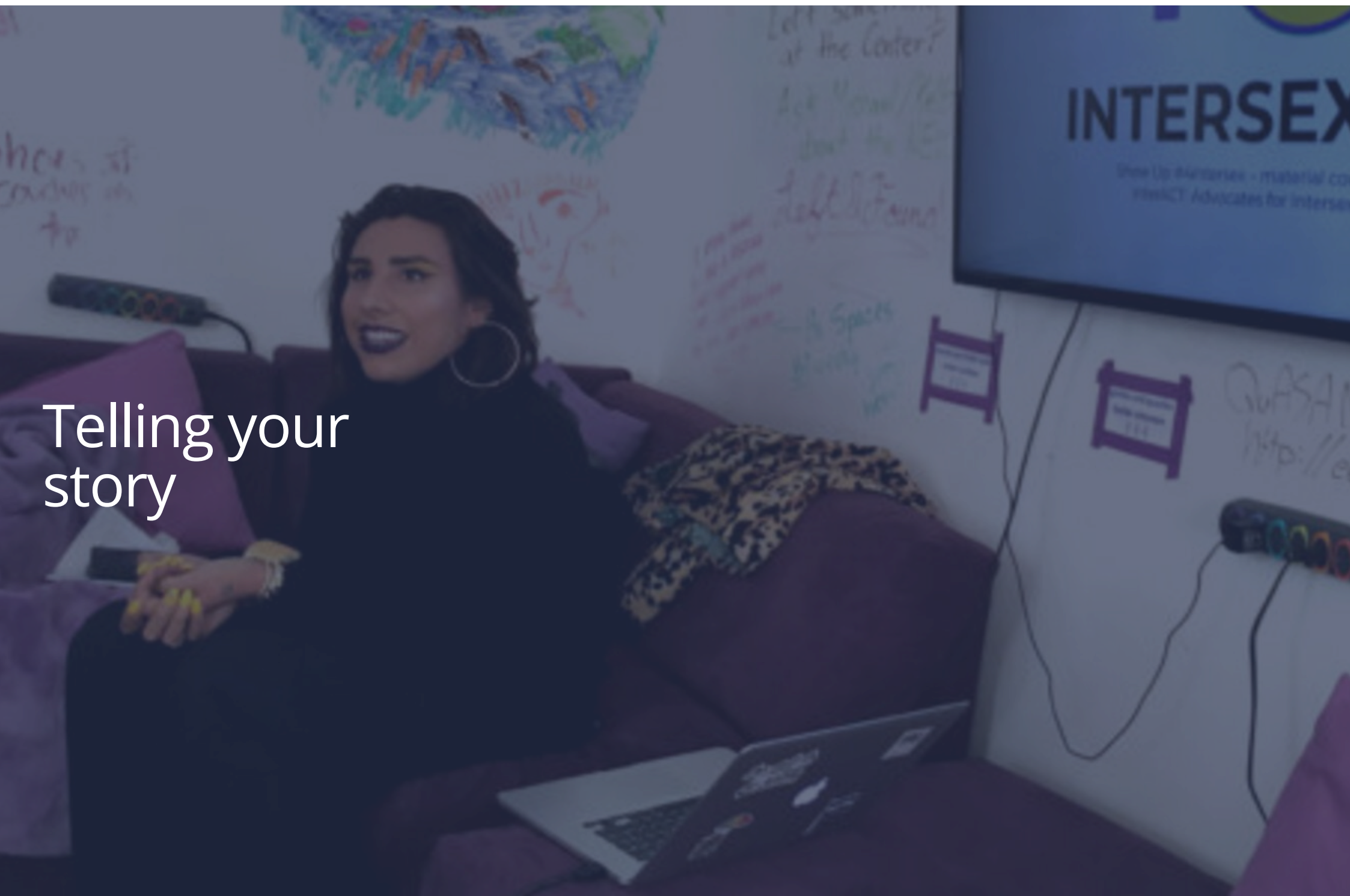
This bill creates a public information and outreach campaign to educate parents and medical professionals about intersex variations and the harms of performing unnecessary surgeries on intersex infants and children. Find it [here](#).



Meeting Handout

This handout gives people a sense of who intersex people are, what non-consensual surgeries on intersex youth are, and why stopping those surgeries is important. Personalize it with quotes, photos, and positive actions taken by medical groups in your state. Find it [here](#).

Telling your story



Items only move forward when legislators champion them. And legislators become champions for causes when they understand the personal stories behind them and are shown the strong connection to communities in their district and state.

The good news? No one knows your story or community like you! But sharing your story can be hard work, and it's important to make sure you're taking care of yourself. Read about intersex advocates' experiences with sharing their stories and setting boundaries [here](#).

1. Educate, then persuade. Many people won't have even a baseline understanding of intersex issues, and may not know the right terms to use. People shut down when they're afraid to make mistakes. You can keep them with you by thinking about what terms you will use and explaining ones that might be unfamiliar.

2. Use first-person language. For example, say things like “as someone who,” “as a family who,” or “as a health care provider who” where appropriate.

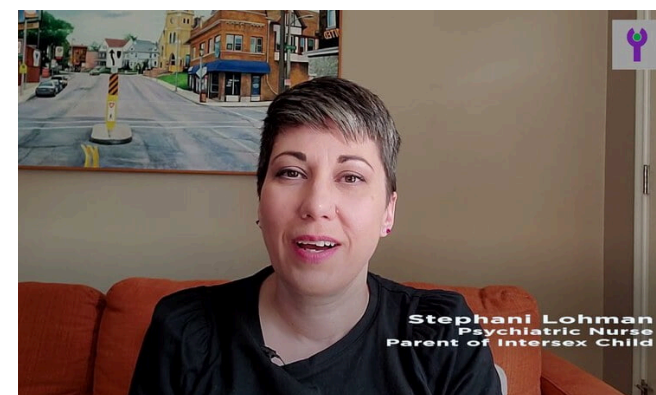
3. Start with shared values. Common values stick, while specifics often don't. Lead with values—like protecting health, respecting autonomy, and empowering families—before connecting those values to what this legislation does to address the issue.

4. Make it local. Show how many people are affected, and highlight the well-organized stakeholders across your state who will support this work. Underscore that this is a leadership opportunity for your elected officials while reminding them that they will not be alone.

5. Support with outside voices, too. Your personal story is essential, but it's important to remind them that others agree with your position. While your audience might not have

previous awareness of intersex issues, they *will* be aware of some key validators like the former Surgeons General and the State Department, which is why we highlight them in our materials.

6. The more, the merrier. This goes for a diversity of perspectives—such as intersex people who have and have not been subjected to surgery, and supportive health care providers and families—and in terms of numbers. It's important to show just how many lives this legislation will touch.



Now, you're ready to get started!

