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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACLU of Puerto Rico Urges Governor to Veto Senate Bill 350

In a letter addressed to Jenniffer González Colón, the organization noted that the measure creates two distinct categories of children: one that allows parents to authorize treatments if the child's identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth, and another that prohibits parents the same right if their child's identity is different.

San Juan, P.R. - The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Puerto Rico called on Governor Jenniffer González Colón to veto Senate Bill 350, which criminalizes doctors and parents and aims to prohibit gender-affirming medical treatments for individuals under the age of 21.

"Senate Bill 350, as written, not only excludes but creates two distinct categories of children: one that allows parents to access and authorize treatments if the child's identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth, and another that prohibits parents the same right if their child's identity is different," stated Lolimar Escudero Rodríguez, Esq., Policy Counsel for the ACLU of Puerto Rico, in the letter sent to the Governor on July 15.

Senate Bill 350, authored by Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz and Senator Joanne Rodríguez Veve, was approved by the Senate and the House and sent to La Fortaleza on April 11. The Governor returned it to the Legislature for the inclusion of amendments suggested by Health Secretary Víctor Ramos Parés, which do not remedy the violation of fundamental constitutional, civil, and human rights, the ACLU warned. The measure was again approved by both chambers and sent back to the Governor on June 28, according to the events recorded in the Unified Legislative Processing System (SUTRA).

Although the measure is titled "Act for the Protection of Health and Well-being of Minors in Puerto Rico," its text is clearly and exclusively aimed at minors whose identity does not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth. The Bill, in addition to ignoring the position of

specialists on the matter, disregards the rigorous medical and specialized consultation process that precedes the determination of parents who authorize such treatments—puberty blockers or hormonal treatments—and instead, criminalizes them.

"We urge you to consider the devastating impact of this legislation on the lives of many Puerto Rican youth and on medical practice on the island," Escudero Rodríguez asserted.

Locally, the consensus among specialists on this issue is that the measure should not be signed into law, a stance shared by the ACLU of Puerto Rico. The list of entities that have expressed their opposition includes the Puerto Rico College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Puerto Rico Psychology Association, the College of Social Work Professionals, the Puerto Rican Association of Professional Counseling, and the Puerto Rico Bar Association, the LGBTQ+ Federation of Puerto Rico, among others.

"The ACLU strongly rejects the approval of a measure that not only criminalizes parents and doctors but directly discriminates against transgender people and denies the existence of trans children and youth, whose very lives may be at risk," argued Annette Martínez Orabona, Executive Director of the ACLU of Puerto Rico.

"The bill ignores evidence and cases in Puerto Rico that exemplify that the use of gender-affirming treatments in minors is a decision accompanied by a battery of doctors and specialists who conclude that such action is in the minor's best interest and supports the optimal development of their whole self," she underscored.

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