Sex-selective Abortion Myths Debunked in New Report by NAPAWF, University of Chicago Law School, ANSIRH

Researchers find that lawmakers rely on flawed racial assumptions to further abortion restrictions.

New York, NY (PRWEB) June 03, 2014 -- The International Human Rights Clinic at the University of Chicago Law School, the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF), and Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health at the University of California, San Francisco, released a groundbreaking report on sex-selective abortion laws and policies in the United States today. Legislation to ban abortion based on the sex of the fetus was the second most popular anti-abortion ban in 2013, and six states have passed bans in recent years. California, home to the largest population of Asian Americans in the United States, considered and rejected moving this ban out of committee just a few weeks ago. Opponents of the legislation assert it is unnecessary and misdirected, and that it stereotypes Asian Americans and restricts women’s access to health care.

The report, “Replacing Myths with Facts: Sex-Selective Abortion Laws in the United States,” identifies six major inaccuracies commonly associated with legislation seeking to ban sex-selective abortions. These inaccuracies appear in arguments made by legislators and in reports issued by legislative committees and are often cited by major news outlets.

The report, “Replacing Myths with Facts: Sex-Selective Abortion Laws in the United States,” identifies six major inaccuracies commonly associated with legislation seeking to ban sex-selective abortions. These inaccuracies appear in arguments made by legislators and in reports issued by legislative committees that are often widely distributed.

Despite the lack of conclusive data that Asian Americans are "importing" sex-selective practices to the United States, legislators have used fearmongering about son-preference practices in China and India to further limit access to abortion for women in the United States. In fact, lawmakers supporting this legislation largely ignore the 11 other countries that have sex ratios at birth that are skewed in favor of males — including six European countries.

“Lawmakers have relied on misinterpretations of narrow data and faulty assumptions about sex selection practices to enact sex-selective abortion bans in the United States,” said Sital Kalantry, clinical professor of law and director of the International Human Rights Clinic, University of Chicago Law School. "Empirical analysis of recent U.S. census data reveals that in the United States, Asian Americans are in fact having more girls than U.S.-born white Americans."

Elected officials have also misreported information about global sex-selective abortion laws. Despite claims to the contrary, only four countries other than the United States — China, Kosovo, Nepal, and Vietnam — have laws explicitly prohibiting sex-selective abortion. Most anti-sex selection laws globally prohibit practices related to assisted fertility. Sex-selective abortion laws in the United States, however, do not prohibit sex selection achieved through use of assisted fertility technologies.

"This report debunks the myths that have been used to advance an anti-abortion agenda that stigmatizes Asian American and Pacific Islanders,” said Miriam Yeung, executive director of the National Asian Pacific
American Women's Forum. "We've long thought of this type of legislation as 'wolves in sheep’s clothing.' This research lays bare the disguise, and what remains is legislation that promotes racial stereotyping and is deeply offensive to Asian American families.”

This report was produced by a multi-disciplinary team, and draws on legal research, empirical analysis of U.S. birth data, fieldwork in India, and an extensive review of scholarly publications in social sciences, law and other disciplines. Findings include:

* Foreign-born Chinese, Indian and Korean-Americans, as well as all Asian Americans considered as a group, have more girls on average than U.S.-born white Americans.

* Sex-selective abortion bans in Pennsylvania and Illinois are not associated with higher numbers of girl children.

* Only four countries other than the United States have laws explicitly banning sex-selective abortion. Most countries that are concerned about sex selection prohibit procedures that allow for sex selection prior to implantation of the embryo into the uterus, and do not restrict abortion.

* Though Asian Americans are most discussed by lawmakers trying to pass sex-selective abortion bans, two countries, Liechtenstein and Armenia, have male-skewed sex ratios at birth as high as or higher than India and China.

* Sex-selective abortion bans in the United States have been proposed by legislators who oppose abortion generally.

* The fact that more boys are born than girls in a given population does not demonstrate that abortions are causing the disparity.


About The International Human Rights Clinic at the University of Chicago Law School: The Clinic works for the promotion of social and economic justice in the United States and globally. The Clinic uses international human rights laws and norms as well as other substantive laws and strategies to draw attention to human rights violations and to develop practical solutions to those problems using interdisciplinary and empirical research methodologies.

About The National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF): NAPAWF is the only multi-issue, progressive, community organizing, and policy advocacy organization for Asian and Pacific Islander women and girls in the U.S. NAPAWF’s mission is to build a movement to advance social justice and human rights for Asian & Pacific Islander (API) women and girls.

About Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH): ANSIRH works to ensure that reproductive health care and policy are grounded in evidence. ANSIRH’s multi-disciplinary team includes clinicians, researchers and scholars in the fields of sociology, demography, anthropology, medicine, nursing, public health, and law. ANSIRH is a program of the Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health at the University of California, San Francisco.
Contact Information
Lyndsay Christian
Camino Public Relations
+1 (212) 255-2575

Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.