

## STATEMENT ON THE SELECT PANEL TO ATTACK WOMEN'S HEALTH

March 1, 2016

We write as organizations deeply opposed to the continued attacks on science, medical research, and women's health care by the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Select Panel to Attack Women's Health (the Panel).

This Panel is part of a sustained systemic effort to cut off women's access to health care, including safe, legal abortion care. In the 114th Congress, congressional leadership has held nine votes to defund Planned Parenthood—including one vote that took place just days after a devastating mass shooting at a Planned Parenthood health center in Colorado—and launched five separate investigations into Planned Parenthood and related issues.

This harmful campaign is premised on nothing more than discredited videos released by extremists opposed to abortion. Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers<sup>1</sup> have been cleared of wrongdoing in numerous venues, including a grand jury that set out to investigate Planned Parenthood in Houston, Texas, but instead indicted the makers of these videos.<sup>2</sup> Even more telling, the twelve states that have launched investigations have turned up no evidence of wrongdoing. An additional eight states decided not to open an investigation at all, citing the lack of credible evidence.<sup>3</sup> Yet, this reckless campaign against women's health continues unabated.

The Panel's destructive fishing expedition targets science and critical life-saving medical research. Fetal tissue research has long contributed to major medical breakthroughs that have saved countless lives—including infant lives—such as vaccines for polio, chicken pox, measles, and rubella.<sup>4</sup> Today, scientists use fetal tissue to study a wide range of devastating health conditions, from degenerative diseases like Parkinson's to AIDS.<sup>5</sup> This Panel should not politicize science that has immeasurably reduced human suffering and holds tremendous promise for the future. Attacking this medical progress is irresponsible and contradicts the Panel's purported "focus" on improving infant lives. If the Panel were truly invested in addressing issues impacting infant lives, it would not have scheduled its March 2 hearing at the exact time as an Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearing on the Zika virus—a pressing public health crisis that is impacting women and infants in our hemisphere.

Moreover, we are deeply concerned that the Panel has made sweeping requests for detailed personal information that would identify researchers, health care providers, medical residents, students, and others. The Panel has refused to adopt any procedural safeguards to protect personal information from inadvertent disclosure, meaning that it could become public without any recourse. Public identification poses grave privacy and security concerns and would expose these individuals to more harassment, intimidation, and physical harm. In fact, health care providers and women seeking health care at facilities that offer reproductive health care are already facing an alarming increase in threats, harassment, and attacks. Since the release of the highly edited and misleading videos in July 2015, three people were killed and nine were injured during an attack in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and four reproductive health care facilities have been targets of arson.<sup>6</sup> No health care professional or researcher should have to fear for their lives for providing healthcare or conducting critical life-saving research.

We oppose the Panel’s politicized campaign against abortion care, just as we oppose all the dangers the campaign presents to women in our country and their health care providers. We urge the Panel to end its attacks on science, medicine, and women.

Advocates for Youth  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Hadassah, The Women’s Zionist Organization of America, Inc.  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
National Abortion Federation  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women’s Health Network  
National Women’s Law Center  
People For the American Way  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Population Institute  
Religious Institute  
Reproductive Health Technologies Project  
Secular Coalition for America  
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

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<sup>1</sup> After watching 504 hours of video, Judge Orrick of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued a preliminary injunction preventing the release of this footage wherein he wrote “I have reviewed the recordings relied on by defendants and find no evidence of criminal wrongdoing.” *National Abortion Federation v. The Center for Medical Progress et al.* Case No. 3:15-cv-03522-WHO Document 354.

<sup>2</sup> Manny Fernandez, *2 Abortion Foes Behind Planned Parenthood Videos Are Indicted*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/26/us/2-abortion-foes-behind-planned-parenthood-videos-are-indicted.html>.

<sup>3</sup> *The Planned Parenthood witch hunt*, WASH. POST, Feb. 20, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-planned-parenthood-witch-hunt/2016/02/20/a6cb0e5c-d660-11e5-b195-2e29a4e13425\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-planned-parenthood-witch-hunt/2016/02/20/a6cb0e5c-d660-11e5-b195-2e29a4e13425_story.html).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Malcolm Ritter, *Human fetal tissue long used for variety of medical studies*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, July 29, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/e0980d2780ff4e4ca9ee17903b5b5dc8/human-fetal-tissue-long-used-variety-medical-studies>; Meredith Wadman, *The Truth about Fetal Tissue Research*, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, Dec. 9, 2015, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-truth-about-fetal-tissue-research/>; Carina Storrs, *How exactly fetal tissue is used for medicine*, CNN, Nov. 30, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/17/health/fetal-tissue-explainer/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *National Abortion Federation Motion for Preliminary Injunction. National Abortion Federation v. The Center for Medical Progress et al.* Case No. 3:15-cv-3522-WHO Document 234-3.