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# Letter: Abortion bill a veiled attack on women

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Louisiana lawmakers are venturing into increasingly absurd territory when it comes to abortion. Last week, members of the Louisiana House advanced dangerous legislation that chips away at women's access to health care — apparently based on a fear of “sex selective abortions” among Asian Americans. House Bill 701 is a “sex-selective abortion ban” that penalizes doctors for providing abortions supposedly sought because a woman has a preference for the gender of her child.

As women and women's rights advocates, we believe that valuing boys over girls is wrong. Lawmakers who introduce them claim these bans are a solution to gender inequality, yet have voted time and time again against measures that would actually empower women.

Just this year, HB701 sponsor Rep. Lenar Whitney voted down equal pay. Let's cut through the deception — this is just a twisted ruse to undermine women's rights.

Masquerading as a measure to promote women's equality, HB701 is just another ploy to roll back the clock on abortion access. This new brand of restriction not only impedes access to care, but also perpetuates the false, dangerous stereotype that Asian Americans do not value women. As Rep. Whitney made undeniably clear on the House floor, this bill stems from an absurd fear of the "influence of the Asian culture in the United States," and it is shameless exploitation of an international problem to wage an anti-abortion war here at home. While son preference remains a serious problem in some countries, a recent study conducted by the University of Chicago shows that Asian Americans in the United States actually give birth to more girls on average than white Americans.

Given this narrative, women in our community risk being interrogated in ways others are not and possibly even turned away from care. Even Asian American providers could fall under

scrutiny for performing abortions when the fetus has been determined to be female. HB701 would undermine the doctor-patient relationship by forcing providers to report a patient's confidential medical information to authorities. Even worse, unlike other versions of this law, HB701 requires doctors to inform every patient of the sex of her child before her abortion. Not only does this subject women to an unnecessary medical procedure, it also makes any woman who is pregnant with a female a suspect.

Louisiana lawmakers are playing politics with women's health. If implemented, HB701 would set a dangerous precedent for defining acceptable reasons for seeking an abortion, opening the door for politicians to further intrude into our personal health decisions.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing group in the country and, since 2000, Louisiana's Asian American community has grown over 30 percent. Lawmakers should take heed before putting the health of our families up for a vote. Let's make sure our representatives know that we expect them to fight to make our lives better — not worse.

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