



FREEDOM IS FOR
EVERYBODY

To: Interested Parties

From: NARAL Pro-Choice America Research Team

Date: September 15, 2021

Anti-Choice Movement Spreads Disinformation, Distorts the Truth of Texas SB 8

As backlash to Texas' ban on abortion care at around six weeks (before many people even know they're pregnant) mounts, the anti-choice movement is actively spreading disinformation and misleading narratives in an effort to deflect criticism of the cruel new law. This is a critical moment for supporters of reproductive freedom to debunk disinformation and oppose efforts to distort the public conversation around SB 8. NARAL Pro-Choice America's research team surfaced and compiled some of the top disinformation narratives that the anti-choice movement is currently pushing. These include:

Falsely Claiming A "Fetal Heartbeat" Exists at Six Weeks

Medical experts have [repeatedly debunked](#) the disinformation that a "fetal heartbeat" exists at six weeks gestation, yet anti-choice organizations and activists [continue to make](#) false claims to the contrary. At this point in pregnancy, the correct medical terminology is "embryo" not "fetus," and the "heartbeat" is electrical activity among cells that will eventually become the heart. Anti-choice activists use this medically inaccurate, intentionally inflammatory term to erase pregnant people from conversations about abortion care and conflate an embryo with a child.

Falsely Claiming that SB 8 Is "Pro-Science."

Known disinformers, such as anti-choice organization Susan B. Anthony List, continue to defy scientific consensus [by using inaccurate "heartbeat" terminology](#) while simultaneously making the false claim that "science" [supports banning abortion care](#). Anti-choice activists baselessly [attack medical experts](#), such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and [media outlets](#) who refuse to parrot their disinformation. In reality, the anti-choice movement has built [an entire infrastructure](#) of ideologically-driven organizations to promote disinformation and [cloaked "science"](#) about abortion in an effort to give their falsehoods a sheen of validity.

Pretending SB 8 Does Not Promote Vigilantism

Most anti-choice activists and politicians have avoided talking about SB 8's private enforcement mechanism, which empowers any private citizen—including anti-choice extremists, ex-partners, and strangers—to sue any person or organization that helps someone access abortion care after about six weeks of pregnancy. While it [praises the mechanism](#) as "unique" and celebrates its difficulty to challenge in court, the anti-choice movement is hoping people do not read deeper into the [wide-ranging implications](#) of enabling private citizens to enforce blatantly unconstitutional laws.

Some anti-choice activists and organizations are attempting to rewrite the reality of how SB 8 works. Students for Life [erroneously claimed](#) that the law did not promote "vigilante justice" while simultaneously claiming that law enforcement was neglecting its "duty," which, by their logic, requires private enforcement of abortion bans. As they continue to face questions and criticism, anti-choice activists will continue to distort the reality of the law and deflect attention from its enforcement mechanism.



FREEDOM IS FOR
EVERYBODY

Falsely Claiming SB 8 Has Broad Support

In the wake of opposition to SB 8 from [Texans](#), [medical associations](#), [human rights experts](#), and the [general public](#), anti-choice groups are [falsely claiming](#) that people in the United States support Texas' cruel ban on abortion. Citing [a poll](#) by Republican-leaning pollster Rasmussen—which only [partially describes](#) SB 8 and *conveniently omits its enforcement mechanism*—anti-choice activists falsely claim that more people support SB 8 than oppose it. In their attempts to explain away backlash, activists like Lila Rose [baselessly argue](#) that it resulted from “media bias & lies.” Aware that [the vast majority of people](#) in the U.S. do not support their attacks on reproductive freedom, anti-choice activists commonly claim that any scientific, medical, or legal expertise that does not agree with them is “biased” or “fake.”

The [relative silence](#) on the specifics of SB 8 from self-proclaimed anti-choice legislators like Texas Republican Senators Ted Cruz and John Cornyn about SB 8 is another clear indication that the anti-choice movement knows SB 8 and efforts like it are extremely unpopular. Known extremists like Reps. [Paul Gosar](#) (R-AZ), [Billy Long](#) (R-MO), and [Andy Biggs](#) (R-AZ)—[all of whom](#) supported overturning the 2020 election—were among the first to praise the Supreme Court allowing SB 8 to go into effect. However, the vast majority of anti-choice federal legislators have yet to comment on the law, indicating that they know supporting it poses a substantial political threat.

Falsely Claiming Banning Abortion Is “Pro-Woman”

Anti-choice activists have long attempted to cloak their attacks on women and pregnant people by erasing them from conversations about abortion care and using [fake feminist](#) narratives. As backlash to SB 8 mounts, they are using these same tactics to [claim the law is “pro-woman”](#) and minimize its harmful consequences. Susan B. Anthony List [touted](#) 11 women lawmakers who supported SB 8 to claim that women are [“leading the fight”](#) to oppose abortion—an unsubtle attempt to imply the law isn't harming women and pregnant people. Meanwhile, Students for Life argued that SB 8 did not “punish women” and made the blatantly false claim that the anti-choice movement “consistently opposed penalizing women” for abortion—ignoring bills introduced in states like Texas and Arizona to criminalize pregnant people and make abortion punishable by death.

Touting Fake Health Centers as Equivalent to Healthcare Providers.

The anti-choice movement continues to promote fake health centers (FHCs)—also known as “crisis pregnancy centers”—as [the centerpiece](#) of its “Post-Roe World.” These fake health centers [use deceptive tactics](#) to target pregnant people before bombarding them with medical disinformation and attempts to coerce them out of seeking abortion care. In the wake of SB 8, anti-choice [activists](#) and [lawmakers](#) have falsely [touted FHCs](#) as an alternative to actual reproductive healthcare providers and a solution for Texans who do not want to remain pregnant. Despite their claims to the contrary, these centers [do not provide adequate resources](#) for pregnant people with low incomes, nor are they typically [licensed to provide actual medical care](#). The movement's false claims about FHCs and other anti-choice organizations being available to people forced to remain pregnant in Texas are simply another way to deflect attention from the harm SB 8 is causing.

###