



national asian pacific american women's forum

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NAPAWF Applauds FDA Decision to Make EC OTC; Fight Continues to Expand Access for Young Women

Washington, DC – Today's decision by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to make Plan B emergency contraception available to women 18 years and older is a huge victory for Asian Pacific Islander (API) women. The decision comes after three years of controversy, political maneuvering and battles between reproductive health care advocates and government officials.

“The FDA's decision today is a critically important step in improving the overall health care of API women,” said Kiran Ahuja, Executive Director of NAPAWF. “For API women, timely access to EC cannot be overstated, given the high number of unintended pregnancy and abortion rates in our community.”

National data reveals that 35% of pregnancies end in abortion for API women, the second highest percentage for all racial and ethnic groups. In addition, between 1994-2000, abortion rates fell for all groups *except* API women. Another study found that over two-thirds of API women are sexually active, yet less than 40% regularly use contraception, increasing their risk of unintended pregnancy and abortion. It is estimated that wider access to EC could reduce the number of unintended pregnancies each year by as much as 50%.

In addition, over the counter access to EC is critical for API women who lack health insurance or access to quality reproductive health care facilities. Thirty-six percent of API women under age 65 lack health insurance and do not have a regular source of health care, which creates an enormous barrier to accessing health care services and prescription drugs. Making EC over the counter will now enable these women to have better access to this time-sensitive drug.

“Despite this victory today, our fight will continue at the grassroots and national levels to expand access to EC for young API women under 18,” said Ahuja. “All women and girls have the fundamental human right to access meaningful sexual and reproductive health care services free of arbitrary and unjustified restrictions.”

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NAPAWF is the only national multi-issue organization dedicated to forging a progressive movement for social and economic justice and the political empowerment of Asian and Pacific American women and girls. NAPAWF unites our diverse communities through organizing, education and advocacy.