

Innovation & Impact: PPLM's Strategies for Change

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts's (PPLM's) integrated strategies to advance health equity are the backbone of all our work in our clinics, in communities, and online.

Statewide, PPLM continues to transform health care delivery, reaching patients who face barriers to affordable, timely care, from abortion to sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening and treatment. PPLM's telehealth program drew more than 10,000 patients in the 2021 fiscal year, over 90% of whom reported very high levels of satisfaction and indicated they are likely to recommend our services to others. Building on this success, PPLM introduced abortion services via telemedicine, through which patients have virtual consultations with providers and then receive abortion pills by mail. "By providing ways for folks to receive abortion care in a way that doesn't require taking time off from work, traveling long distances, finding childcare, or putting their livelihoods in jeopardy, telehealth allows more patients to get timely, affordable care," says Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak, PPLM president and CEO. Through another service, PPLM patients seeking gender-affirming surgery can receive free mental health assessments from a social worker and are provided with surgery referral letters. These letters are often required by surgeons



PPLM staff and city officials at the December 2021 signing officially designating Springfield as a Fast Track City.

and health insurance plans before surgery and can present costly obstacles for patients.

Seeking to achieve broad impacts through structured, immediate goals, PPLM is continuing our work on the ground in Springfield and Worcester, where young Black people, Latino/a/x and/or Hispanic teens, and teen parents face critical barriers to quality sexual and reproductive health care and culturally responsive sex education. In December 2021, Springfield officially became a *Fast Track City*, joining a global program to achieve zero new HIV infections and zero AIDS-related deaths by 2030. Due in part to the hard work of the PPLM team, Springfield is now one of 30 cities and communities worldwide officially in partnership to end HIV/AIDS.

Through these and other strategic initiatives, PPLM is

preparing to advance sexual and reproductive health care even beyond Massachusetts. This year, PPLM will launch the multidisciplinary *PPLM Center for Sexual and Reproductive Health* ("the Center") to foster excellence and health equity nationwide by leveraging its own expertise in research, training, and education. Launching in May 2022, the Center will engage a broad and bold range of partners, including academic institutions, teaching hospitals, health care professionals, social service and community-based organizations, schools, educators, and peer agencies. Readers of this *Advocate* are among the very first to learn of the new Center; look for more information about the Center's work in the next issue!

ceo's corner

Russ Mezikofsky



Dear Friends,

In 2021, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM) reached our ambitious goals through innovation and determination, despite the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our supporters stood by us with resounding generosity, enabling us to care for our patients, educate families, conduct

cutting-edge research, and advocate for public health policies that disrupt disparities and advance health equity in our state.

This spring, I join in the outrage of my Planned Parenthood colleagues across the country as we face a likely end to the constitutional right to abortion in the United States—with near-total bans in states like Texas and Mississippi and 26 additional states poised to enact similar legislation if *Roe v. Wade* falls. Yet I am

inspired by our supporters and our staff and by what we have accomplished despite this national threat. We are prepared for what comes next and equipped to tackle the challenges thrown our way.

As you will read in this issue of the *Advocate*, our work proceeds apace. We will continue to move the needle toward progress through strategic initiatives (page 1). Our education programs are reaching young people, families, and professional educators around the country (page 3). And rest assured, PPLM stands ready to fight for access to abortion in Massachusetts and across the nation (page 2).

PPLM's commitment to care—no matter what—would not be possible without your support. From the bottom of my heart, especially in these difficult times, thank you for standing with Planned Parenthood.

Jennifer Childs-Roshak, MD
President and CEO

advocate perspectives: PPLM Acts to Protect Abortion Access

In December 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on Mississippi's 15-week abortion ban that directly challenges *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 ruling which affirmed abortion as a constitutional right in the United States. Later that month, the court let stand a Texas law which banned abortion as early as six weeks into pregnancy, signaling that a majority of the justices are prepared to overturn or fundamentally undermine *Roe*.

PPLM is joining with the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) in a national movement to inform the public about these cases' devastating impacts. Here in Massachusetts, 2020's passage of key provisions of the ROE Act improved access to abortion for young people and



The Honorable Nancy Gertner, PPLM President and CEO Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak, and PPLM Board Chair Renée Landers, Esq. at the "Perspectives on *Roe v. Wade*" virtual event on December 14, 2021.

people seeking abortions later in pregnancy. Yet geographic and financial barriers continue to push abortion out of reach, especially for people who face systemic barriers to care. PPLM is actively working to improve access in regions including Southeastern Massachusetts, where there are currently no abortion providers, by establishing partnerships with and connecting patients to providers,

abortion funds, and other services. "The access issue is not perfect in Massachusetts and PPLM is working hard to overcome these barriers [...] There is a lot of work that remains to be done here," says Professor Renée Landers, Esq., PPLM board chair and Constitutional and health law expert.



Eager for Knowledge: Update on PPLM's Education Programs

Students and parents, kids and teens, teachers, and other professionals are joining forces with PPLM educators in larger numbers than ever before, participating in programs that help people make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. In classrooms, in print, and especially online, people are asking questions and getting culturally responsive, medically accurate answers about everything from choosing birth control options to building healthy relationships.

PPLM's comprehensive evidence-based curriculum, *Get Real: Comprehensive Sex Education That Works*, has reached over 300,000 students in 44 states and four countries. The program recently introduced Spanish-language teaching materials to ensure inclusivity and increase access across the country. The acclaimed curriculum also released a complete

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digital version of its middle- and high-school materials, so that *Get Real* educators can easily use them in virtual classrooms. New professional education opportunities



Get Real Teen Council members and PPLM staff at the virtual GRTC retreat in September 2021.

are available on critical topics such as sex education for pregnant and parenting teens, commercially sexually exploited young people, and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Foundational trainings are offered on sexually explicit media, healthy masculinity, inclusive spaces, student questions, and more.

PPLM's peer leadership initiatives have proven especially effective in expanding access to sex education in communities severely impacted by the pandemic, continued stigma, and barriers to care. Members of the *Get Real* Teen Council (GRTC), dedicated high school students in Metro Boston and Central MA, receive GRTC sex education training and learn facilitation skills. Through peer workshops and one-on-one interactions, the GRTC has reached 296,500 young people. PPLM is planning to establish a third

group of GRTC peer educators in the Greater Springfield area. The Sexual Health Ambassador Program (SHAP) graduated its second cohort of participants in partnership with the Hector Reyes House in Worcester. SHAP engages with adult peers in Latino/a/x and/or Hispanic communities to provide these leaders with education and information on sexual health they can share as they work to decrease stigma in their communities.

PPLM's educational programs are supported by individuals and foundations who make this ongoing innovation and expansion possible. Says Jennifer Hart, vice president of education, "PPLM educators could not provide groundbreaking comprehensive sex education for parents, youth, and educators across the state and nationwide without the generous support of donors who believe in its impact."

faces & places

We are pleased to welcome Nate Horwitz-Willis, MPH, DrPH as the executive director of PPAF and executive vice president of external affairs for PPLM!



From above, counterclockwise: PPAF Associate Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs Mehreen Butt and President Jennifer Childs-Roshak; Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley; Senator Ed Markey and a PPAF supporter; Boston Mayor Michelle Wu with Boston City Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune (then both candidates) at the rally for abortion justice in Boston in October 2021; PPAF Manager of Mobilization and BIPOC Organizing Shanique Spalding; and PPAF supporters at the Northampton rally on the same day.



PROTECT SAFE, LEGAL ABORTION



The FY21 PPLM Annual Report is available online!

We invite you to learn more about the work your investment in PPLM made possible by visiting pplm.org/fy21ar.

Planning is in progress for the 2022 Celebration of Choices! Keep an eye on your email for more details about this exciting opportunity to celebrate and support PPAF's work.

Please support PPLM today by visiting www.pplm.org/donate or emailing development@pplm.org.