SUMMER 2023

THE ADVOCATE

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts

MEETING THE MOMENT: PPAF'S NEW LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

In the year since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, abortion bans in 20 states have created a national public health crisis, causing millions of people to lose access to essential reproductive health care. With some of the strongest protections in the country, Massachusetts has an important role to play in the abortion access landscape, and that means the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund of Massachusetts (PPAF) has urgent work to do to make care here more accessible.

"In recent years, Massachusetts has stood for reproductive health, rights, and freedom by passing comprehensive abortion access legislation. This session, we're asking legislators to continue that commitment by passing laws that will make the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health care even more accessible and help to ensure Massachusetts is a place where everyone can seek care without fear or shame," said Sheila Ramirez, director of health policy and government relations.

PPAF's 2023-2024 legislative agenda focuses on the following priorities:

To improve patient care and maternal health outcomes, we're fighting for greater investment in the sexual and reproductive health care workforce, through means such as clinical training programs; advocating for better access to doula services which are proven to improve Black maternal health outcomes; and advocating for stronger data privacy laws to protect patients' freedom to travel.

To expand access to abortion and other sexual and reproductive health care, we're supporting the Abortion Access Act, which will further remove

PPAF Greater Boston Organizer Cait Mallery, Western Massachusetts Organizer Jon Marx, Director of Health Policy and Government Relations Sheila Ramirez, and Northeastern Massachusetts Organizer Arlenne Rodriguez-Gonzalez lobbying at the Massachusetts State House in March for the Common Start bill, one of PPAF's priorities for the 2023-2024 legislative session.

medically unnecessary barriers to abortion that stigmatize and/or delay care and will combat deceptive crisis pregnancy centers. We are advocating for equitable telehealth policies so Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM) can continue providing telehealth services for a range of sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion. We are also seeking to improve access to birth control by allowing pharmacists to dispense certain forms of hormonal contraceptives and working with coalition partners to push for the passage of the Healthy Youth Act to set medically accurate, age appropriate, and inclusive standards for sex education taught in Massachusetts public schools.

To advance health equity, we will continue supporting legislation that aims to reduce police violence, ensure immigrants can seek care without fear of deportation, lift children and families out of poverty, deliver universal affordable childcare, and make Massachusetts's parentage laws equitable and LGBTQ-inclusive.

Improving care. Expanding access. Advancing equity.
Find PPAF's 2023-2024 legislative agenda on our website.

Learn more about this legislative agenda at **pplmvotes.org**.

LEADERSHIP CORNER

Dear friends,

This June brings us not just the warmth of summertime, but a somber reminder that the *Dobbs* decision came down one year ago, overturning *Roe v. Wade* and ending the federal right to an abortion. In the months since, twenty states have passed legislation to ban or severely restrict abortion access. More heartening, several states, including our own, sprang into action to codify or expand abortion rights, and when abortion has been on the ballot in six states (red, blue, and purple), reproductive freedom has won every time.

In Massachusetts, abortion is and will remain legal. Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM) has seen the number of patients coming to us from other states for abortion care almost double, and through the advocacy work of the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund of Massachusetts (PPAF), we've ensured those patients and their providers will be protected. We are committed to ensuring anyone who turns to PPLM for health care can access and afford our services.

In this Advocate, you will read about PPAF's new legislative agenda (page 1). A PPLM Clinic Escort will share his experience of welcoming a patient into our health center (page 2). And we will discuss medication abortion, which is facing unprecedented attacks nationwide (page 3). Your support of PPLM makes it possible for us to fight back against these unrelenting attacks and keep pushing forward—no matter what. Thank you for standing with PPLM.

Sincerely,

Ellen Frank
Interim President and Chief Executive Officer

Wanda McClain
PPLM Board Chair

Photo credit: Charlie Abrahams.

ADVOCATE PERSPECTIVES:
FACE TO FACE: A CLINIC ESCORT'S SHIFT

I tighten my N-95 mask on a weekday morning, both to cut out the biting wind and to ward off the unmasked anti-abortion protestors who shout inches away from my face. For a weekday, there are more of them than usual. Maybe it's part of the fallout from the *Dobbs* decision. They seem more energized today as a patient makes her way between two protestors toward the clinic entrance. I'm alone this morning but I managed to meet her before she crosses the PPLM property line, placing my body between the trailing protestors and the patient.

As I escort her to the clinic door, I say in a warm but measured tone, "Welcome to Planned Parenthood. If you need any help when you leave, let me know." After closing the clinic door behind her, I remain standing, buffering the voices shouting, "You will regret what they do to you in there for the rest of your life." Soon they move away to another side of the entrance, ready to pounce on the next person seeking reproductive health services.

I doubt patients can hear the misinformation thrown at them once they're inside the clinic. That thought has given me comfort during my many years as a volunteer. The roles other escorts and I play during our two-hour shifts are small, given the unrelenting attacks on all levels of abortion access across the country. Still, knowing that I can help PPLM be a haven for those seeking reproductive health services in today's political climate counts for something.

Alan Stoskopf
Clinic Escort Captain

MEDICATION ABORTION IS ESSENTIAL

Medication abortion, a safe and effective way to terminate an early pregnancy, is the most common form of abortion care. In 2020, it accounted for 53% of abortions in the United States. Last year, PPLM saw over 5,000 patients for medication abortion care. Often referred to as "the abortion pill," the regimen is a combination of two medications, mifepristone and misoprostol, taken in sequence over 24-48 hours. The pills cause cramping and bleeding to empty the uterus and can feel like a really heavy period. "Many patients choose medication abortion because it's non-invasive and can be done in the comfort of their home, with the support of loved ones or in private. It has given patients the ease, confidence, and freedom to choose to end their pregnancy on their own terms and with less fear, stigma, and shame," said Liz Higgins, CNP, PPLM's director of clinical services.

Medication abortion accounts for **more than half** of abortions in the United States.

It enables **more equitable access** to abortion care and has been used **safely and effectively** for over two decades.

PPLM offers medication abortion care in-clinic and via telehealth, a program that has been a gamechanger for making abortion more accessible to patients in parts of the state like the Cape, Islands, and South Coast where the nearest abortion provider is more than 50 miles away. Now patients can get pills mailed directly to them after a virtual consultation with a clinician.

Medication abortion has become the latest target of the anti-abortion movement's cruel campaign to ban abortion nationwide, particularly through a federal court case challenging the FDA's (U.S. Food and Drug Administration's) approval of mifepristone. Let's be clear: any attempt to ban or restrict access to medication abortion – which has a 99% safety rate and 95% efficacy rate – has no basis in medicine or interest in public health. "The medications used for abortion are routine parts of maternal health care, used also for miscarriage management, labor induction, and other pregnancy-related care. They are integral to delivering the safest, most effective, and most compassionate reproductive health care to our patients," said Dr. Danielle Roncari, PPLM's vice president of medical services.

Protecting and expanding access to medication abortion is essential to our mission. Everyone deserves the ability to make decisions about their own reproductive lives and futures, including choosing the method of care that works best for them. By sharing information about medication abortion – that it is safe, effective, and common – we can remove stigma and fight back against baseless attacks on our health care.

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– Dr. Danielle Roncari, PPLM, Vice President of Medical Services

FACES + PLACES

From left: PPLM Get Real Teen Council (GRTC) Educator Rachel Davis and GRTC members Fran and Sasha presenting the group's STI and Protection Methods workshop for PPLM supporters at a virtual event in February.

DOUBLE THE IMPACT
Does your company match employee contributions to PPLM? Visit **pplm.org/matching-gifts** or check with your human resources department to see if your gift is eligible for a match.

From left: PPLM Volunteer Manager Morgan Demers, and PPAF Volunteers Joanna Wang, Ananya Zutshi and Maggie Kobleski using the photo booth at Celebration of Choices 2023

From left: Celebration of Choices Co-Chair Melanie Calzetti-Spahr, former PPLM/PPAF President Dr. Jen Childs-Roshak and PPAF Board Chair and Celebration of Choices Co-Chair Reena Singh, presenting the Nonnie S. Burns Award for Advocacy to Dr. Childs-Roshak.

From left: PPLM Interim President & CEO Ellen Frank and Nonnie S. Burns for Advocacy Award Recipient, Dr. Jen Childs-Roshak

FOCUS LOCAL

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