



FROM THE CEO

We continue to expand access in Maryland.

Since the fall of *Roe* last summer, we expected, and we've seen, many attempts to restrict access to health care. Most pressing has been the abortion bans put into place across our country, including our neighbors to the south, pushing patients to travel north. Disparities in accessing health care existed before the fall of *Roe*; however, these disparities are exacerbated by the Supreme Court's decision and states' subsequent abortion bans.

Delays in accessing health care, including but not limited to abortion care, can lead to long-term economic hardship and poor health outcomes. This is especially true for communities already vulnerable in health care due to social and economic inequalities. This is also true for your friends and neighbors. Many doctors, who are not OBGYNs, are wary of accepting jobs in states with abortion bans, or are moving away from states with bans, because they fear for their profession and their families. We are all affected.

In addition to attacks on our reproductive rights, hundreds of anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been proposed this year. Many of these bills aim to aggressively limit the rights of trans people by banning gender-affirming care and threatening doctors with criminal charges for performing that care, prompting health care providers to move and patients to travel for care or wait longer than necessary. Sound familiar?

Planned Parenthood believes that everyone deserves the freedom to make choices about their own bodies, in consultation with their providers and without government interference or burden. We are in this together. And we are stronger together.

In this newsletter, you'll read about our efforts to continue expanding access for our patients through our advocacy, clinical care, and education efforts. We've strengthened reproductive rights at the state level here in Maryland, expanded our clinical services, and educated the community about the reproductive and sexual health care and services available to them.

Our work is far from over, but we are so proud of everything we were able to accomplish this year, despite obstacles. **When challenges arise, we keep going and we provide care, no matter what. But we cannot do it alone. Thank YOU.**



With gratitude,

Karen J. Nelson

ADVOCACY



With abortion bans sweeping the nation, in Maryland we are lucky to have advocates both in our organization and in Annapolis pushing bills to further protect Marylanders. The 2022 legislative session was one of the most impactful years for abortion access in our state, with the passing of the Abortion Care Access Act. This year's 2023 legislative session made Maryland history.

The 2023 reproductive rights package passed by the Maryland General Assembly was signed into law by Governor Wes Moore. These bills:

- **Shield abortion providers who care for out-of-state patients from punishment** by states that have banned or severely limited abortion.
- **Protect patients' electronic health records** when they access reproductive health care in Maryland, ensuring that private medical decisions cannot be used against patients if they cross state lines.
- **Require Maryland's public universities to provide 24/7 access to over-the-counter contraceptives** and refer students to comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care services (the first legislation of its kind in the nation).

The biggest item on PPM's legislative agenda was legislation entitled Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom which positions Maryland to amend the state constitution. Having passed the General Assembly, the matter now goes to the voters as a ballot initiative in 2024.

Once passed by voters, this Constitutional Amendment will enshrine the right to reproductive freedom here in Maryland, providing the highest possible level of protection for abortion care. With this amendment on the ballot in 2024, you'll be hearing more from the Planned Parenthood advocacy team and its related entities in the coming months.

As we celebrate our local wins, we also stand in solidarity with states that do not have the same access and protections that we have here in Maryland. We are grateful that we have been able to continue providing care to Marylanders and expand care to patients traveling from out of state. But we also know that reproductive freedom won't be achieved until we all have the right to access health care and education.

If you are interested in getting involved with abortion advocacy efforts in Maryland or keeping up to date on Maryland policy issues, contact PublicAffairs@ppm.care.

Make a donation online! Visit www.ppm.care/reprohero

PPM is continuously improving and expanding our clinical services. **Expanding our cervical cancer screening and treatment program was one of our top clinical priorities for 2023.**



Cervical cancer, cancer of the cervix, is caused by some types of HPV, a common sexually transmitted infection. Patients who visit PPM health centers for their regular health and family planning appointments already receive Pap tests and, in some cases, colposcopy screening to check for cervical cancer. The next step is conducting LEEP, the procedure that is indicated after abnormal cells or tissue are found during a Pap or colposcopy.

LEEP procedures are a critical tool in cervical cancer treatment and prevention, as they allow a provider to remove precancerous cells from the cervix before they become cancer. PPM recently purchased upgraded LEEP and colposcopy equipment and will be offering these services in-clinic.

So, what is a LEEP procedure? During a LEEP procedure, a patient lies down on an exam table while a doctor or nurse puts a speculum into the vagina to gain access to the cervix. The doctor or nurse applies a numbing medicine and uses a small electrical wire loop to remove the abnormal cells. Then, the cells are sent to a lab for testing. The procedure takes 10 minutes and removes all abnormal cervical cells most of the time.

This procedure is life-saving, as cervical cancer is one of the most treatable forms of cancer in its early stage. We are grateful to a local Baltimore-based foundation for funding the equipment and training necessary to launch LEEP at PPM!

Test your knowledge about birth control!

- 1 True or False:** The birth control pill is 100% effective.
- 2 True or False:** All birth control methods can protect against STIs (sexually transmitted infections).
- 3 True or False:** An IUD (intrauterine device) is one of the most effective forms of birth control.
- 4 True or False:** The birth control ring (also called the vaginal ring or the ring) is a barrier method of birth control.
- 5 True or False:** The Depo-Provera shot, aka Depo, needs to be administered every month to effectively prevent pregnancy.
- 6 True or False:** The birth control implant (Nexplanon), which is inserted under the skin of your upper arm, can protect against pregnancy for up to 5 years.
- 7 True or False:** The first oral contraception was approved by the FDA in 1960.

1. False. If you use the pill perfectly, it's 99% effective. But it's easy to forget or miss pills so in reality the pill is about 93% effective.
2. False. Condoms are the only birth control method that protect against STIs, including HIV.
3. True. An IUD will prevent pregnancy if inserted within 5 days of unprotected sex. And it'll keep preventing pregnancy for 8 to 12 years (depending on which one you get).
4. False. The birth control ring is a hormonal method of birth control. The ring releases estrogen and progestin into the body, preventing pregnancy 24/7.
5. False. A new shot is needed every 12 to 13 weeks, so only about 4 times per year.
6. True. The longevity of the birth control implant is one of its benefits.
7. True. By 1965, one in four married women under 45 in America had used the pill and that number continued to increase every year.

EDUCATION

PPM fosters lasting relationships with Marylanders across the lifespan from 4th grade to senior citizens through our comprehensive sexual health education programming and training. With the recent book bans and censorship taking place in schools, educating and empowering our students has become more important than ever.

PPM's **Peer Educator Program** is intended for high school students interested in health education, counseling, and community service. Peer Educators are equipped with the tools to act as educational resources to their peers, represent PPM at events, and advocate for teen issues at the state legislature.

In-person and virtual Teen Talks are facilitated by the Peer Educators and cover topics such as healthy relationships, consent, birth control, sexual orientation and gender identity, and more.



I was able to co-facilitate a Teen Talk for our entire student body and staff on the topic of consent. That above everything else is the thing I feel most proud of in my high school career, shares **Christian, a 12th grade Peer Educator at Baltimore School for the Arts.**

PPM's **Health Educator Incubator Program** is designed to uplift educators of color, specifically those from HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). College Health Liaisons are placed in schools as a resource for students to come talk to about sexual health topics. Trainees offer lunch time tabling, meet with students one-on-one, and partner with teachers and school support staff, working to break down taboos in school communities around sexual and reproductive health.

I am proud to say that those who matriculate through PPM's Health Incubator Program have the necessary knowledge, skill, and enthusiasm to be key leaders in the reproductive health care world, says **Peggy B., Education and Outreach Coordinator at PPM.**

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Peggy B. began her time with PPM as a Health Liaison in 2018. Now, five years later and working as a full-time educator at PPM, she is a living example of the program's mission and success. **PPM's Health Liaison Program gave me the opportunity to not only grow but to truly fall in love with public health,** prompting me to continue my work for this amazing organization, Peggy explains. *It is so important that our youth receive non-judgmental, comprehensive sex education that will aid them in making better health choices.*

