

# THE ADVOCATE

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts

## ASPIRE CENTER RELEASES NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ABORTION RESTRICTIONS ON TEENS

In March, PPLM released national legal research conducted by its ASPIRE Center for Sexual and Reproductive Health that assesses the abortion rights of teens, creating a first-of-its-kind map of minor abortion access that shows where inequalities are the starkest. With a grading system that rates all 50 states' abortion laws from most accessible (A) to least accessible (F) for people under 18, the Minor Abortion Access Research and Advocacy Project (MAARAP) found that several states that have robust reproductive rights laws, like Massachusetts, score highly on access when age is not a factor, but fall short for young people due to barriers created by parental involvement laws.

**“Research tells us that requiring a young person to involve a parent or judge in their abortion decision can put their health and safety at risk and can significantly delay access to care. Parental involvement laws, like the one in Massachusetts, create unnecessary and unfair barriers to care for young people,”** said Dominique Lee, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts.

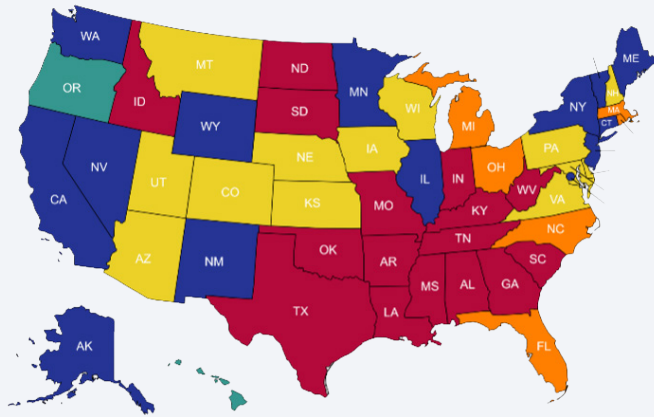
Through its nationwide analysis of parental involvement laws, ASPIRE found that 37 states require some form of parental involvement in a teen's decision to have an abortion, even though parental consent is not required for minors to make other pregnancy related medical decisions. Although many of these states have banned abortion, ASPIRE found that the majority of states where abortion is legal still restrict teens' ability to access this care. This research also shows opportunities for progress: 12 states earned a higher grade for overall abortion access than for minor access, indicating opportunities

for state-level action to improve abortion access for young people.

Leading the research were report co-authors Shoshanna Ehrlich, a professor emerita at the University of Massachusetts Boston who has written extensively on the topic of teen abortion rights, and MaryRose Mazzola, PPLM's Chief External Affairs Officer who oversees PPLM's legal research.

“The goal of this project is to demonstrate the harm and the hypocrisy of parental involvement laws and to identify opportunities for states to eliminate these laws, especially in abortion-protective states,” said Mazzola. “In most states, teens can self-consent to all pregnancy-related medical decisions except for abortion. That unequal standard is not about health or safety but about control and stigma. Young people, just like anyone else, deserve full control over their bodies and reproductive futures.”

To read the MAARAP report, visit [www.pplm.org/aspire](http://www.pplm.org/aspire).



Minor Specific Abortion Access Grade

- A
- B
- C
- D
- F

# LEADERSHIP CORNER

## Dear friends,

In my first few months at Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM), I have relished learning about the incredible work we're doing right here in Massachusetts and building relationships with our dedicated staff, community members, partners, and supporters. Most of all, I am excited about the future as we strive to improve health care delivery, undertake more groundbreaking research, advocate for more equitable policies, and advance sex education.

We are steadfast in this mission even as we navigate a fraught legal landscape nationally. Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in two cases that could hinder access to reproductive health care in this country. The first one challenges the availability of mifepristone, a drug used in the safest and most effective medication abortion and miscarriage care regimen. Another case could deny patients lifesaving abortion care in medical emergencies. That's why the work we do here at PPLM is so important to ensuring that abortion remains safe, legal, and accessible for everyone.

In this issue of the Advocate, you'll learn more about PPLM's recent move to expand pain management options for IUD procedures and other forms of reproductive health care (page 2), our work with students through Generation Action (page 3), and the findings of our research on minors' access to abortion care throughout the country (page 1). Thanks to supporters like you, we can confidently tackle these challenges.

## We are inspired every day by your unwavering devotion to our mission.

I hope you have a restful, happy, and rejuvenating summer!



Sincerely,  
**Dominique Lee**, President and Chief Executive Officer

## ADVOCATE PERSPECTIVES: PATIENTS ASKED AND WE LISTENED

In March, PPLM responded to patient demand and officially began offering the option of sedation when undergoing long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) insertions, colposcopies, and loop electrosurgical excision procedures (LEEPs).

Offering sedation services will benefit patients, especially for procedures such as IUD insertions, which can be uncomfortable and painful for some. Patients who receive sedation typically feel calmer, more comfortable, and more relaxed during their procedures.

**"In each clinic that we do, patients routinely report that they have had difficult experiences with outside providers and have met roadblocks when seeking appropriate pain management for gynecological procedures. Patients express deep gratitude and the feeling of empowerment being able to access LARCs with sedation."** — Julia Max, Lead Clinician

Between 2015 and 2019, about 20% of women relied on an IUD as their form of contraception, a large jump from the 8% of women who used them between 2006 and 2010. However, the possible pain associated with the procedure is often cited as a reason why many fear turning to IUDs as a form of birth control, despite their 99% efficacy rate.



**Just 4% of physicians in the U.S. offer local anesthetic for IUD insertions, and even fewer offer sedation. We are proud that PPLM is now among the first sexual and reproductive health care providers to offer patients this kind of care.**

## AN UPDATE ON PLANNED PARENTHOOD'S GENERATION ACTION

Planned Parenthood Generation Action is a national network of ardent and enthusiastic young activists which boasts 16 active chapters in Massachusetts. Members organize events on their own college and university campuses and within their communities to mobilize advocates for reproductive freedom, raise public awareness about reproductive health and rights, and create lasting change in those communities. Some of their recent events include abortion advocacy workshops, STI and safe sex presentations, fundraising for abortion funds, sex ed trivia night, and distributing sexual health supplies on campus.

On February 24th, students from Boston College, Clark University, College of the Holy Cross, Lasell University, Mount Holyoke College, and Williams College, took part in the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM) 2024 Generation Action Summit, held at Clark University in Worcester.

According to Jon Marx, PPLM's western Massachusetts organizer,

**"This summit comes at a critical juncture in the fight for sexual and reproductive rights, as we're seeing a relentless assault on rolling back access to abortion, sex education, and other essential sexual and reproductive health care nationwide. Generation Action gives young activists and organizers the tools they need to combat abortion stigma, educate their peers about sexual and reproductive health, engage meaningfully with their communities about reproductive rights, and most of all that they have the power to mold the better world that they deserve."**

During the summit, students participated in a reproductive justice workshop hosted by SisterSong, a national reproductive justice organization led by women of color. In later sessions, they learned about the basics of legislative advocacy and communications to grow their organizing and advocacy skills. SisterSong also delivered the keynote address.

Students relished the opportunity to meet other chapter members in person, exchange ideas, and learn from the presenters.

**"Through our club, Pro-Choice Clark, we create a space for students to talk about reproductive justice and health care topics like abortion access without shame,"** said Maya Fiallos Wylie, a freshman student at Clark University and member of their Gen Action chapter Pro-Choice Clark.

The event organizers and presenters also loved hearing from these passionate young people who are brimming with ideas and eager to make lasting change. As Marx observed,

**"Our Gen Action students are amazing, and they continually inspire me and give me hope for the future."**





# FACES + PLACES



2024 recipient of the Nonnie S. Burnes Award for Advocacy, Rep. Aaron Michlewitz (center), and Dominique Lee (third from right) with the Burnes family at The Repro Party, the annual fundraiser for the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund of MA.



Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, Dominique Lee, and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll at a meeting in February.



Chief External Affairs Officer MaryRose Mazzola and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu at Mayor Wu's Annual Lunar New Year Celebration on March 11.



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## FOCUS LOCAL