

## PPAF Reduces Barriers to Abortion Care

Just days before the end of last year's legislative session, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts' political arm, the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund of Massachusetts (PPAF), successfully helped secure the passage of key provisions of the ROE Act into law, expanding equitable access to abortion care in our state. Over the past two years, PPAF led a broad coalition of social justice groups, health advocacy organizations, and grassroots activists to pass the ROE Act and dismantle discriminatory and medically unnecessary barriers to abortion care. The dynamic campaign paid off.

When the coalition mobilized supporters in response to the confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett to the U.S. Supreme Court, the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate were further motivated to take action locally, incorporating key provisions of the ROE Act into the state's annual budget.

While the provisions do not exactly match the ROE Act, they do reduce barriers to care for a significant number of people. Among their many reforms, the provisions allow young people aged 16 and 17 to make their own decisions about abortion care without having to go before a judge, and allow remote hearings for those under 16. With this reform, Massachusetts has become the first state to legislatively ease

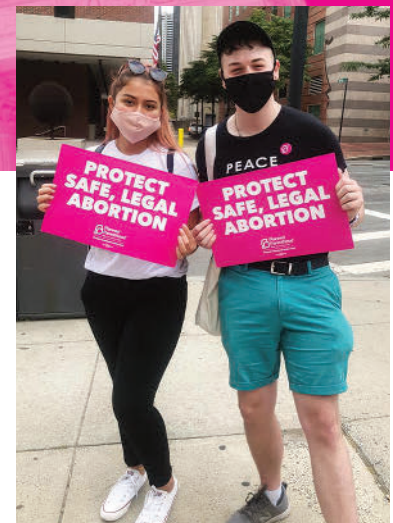


Right: PPAF supporters at a press conference denouncing the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the U.S. Supreme Court in September.

burdensome restrictions on young people's access to care. In addition, people can now obtain abortion care later in pregnancy in cases of a fatal fetal diagnosis – without having to travel across the country.

The road to safe, legal abortion care for all has never been smooth, and this process was no different. Governor Baker attempted to weaken the legislation, and then vetoed it altogether when the Legislature rejected his proposed anti-abortion changes. PPAF, ROE Act Coalition partners, lawmakers, and the public swiftly responded, and in a matter of days the House and Senate voted to override the Governor's veto and enact the bill into law.

As the Commonwealth began a new year with reformed abortion laws, PPAF turned quickly to its agenda for the 2021-2022 legislative session. In addition to improving equitable access to sexual and



reproductive health care, PPAF is prioritizing intersectional legislation that supports the wellbeing of patients and addresses systemic discrimination their communities face, in service to our commitment to health equity. Says Tricia Wajda, PPAF's vice president of external affairs, "It is more important than ever that our legislative agenda center all of the needs of our patients – from their reproductive rights, to their ability to lead healthy and secure lives. That is how we achieve true reproductive freedom for all."

# ceo's corner

Russ Mezikoisky



## Dear Friends,

I welcomed this new year with renewed optimism and purpose and felt a great weight lifted in November, when the American people elected a new administration – one that trusts doctors and scientists and values our reproductive freedom. While we celebrate this victory, we also recognize the challenges we still face:

a U.S. Supreme Court considering the fate of the Affordable Care Act and poised to gut *Roe v. Wade*, inequitable access to health care due to discriminatory barriers, a global pandemic, ongoing anti-democratic white supremacist violence, and deep divisions within our country.

Even here in Massachusetts, systemic racism causes harm and has dire consequences for many. PPLM is determined to expand access to essential care across the state (page 2), break down barriers and stigma, and

advance health equity (page 3). And we will advocate in coalition for reforms, like the ROE Act, that support these goals of access and equity (page 1).

We know that equity work begins at home. PPLM is striving every day to become a truly anti-racist organization. Toward this end, we've integrated goals for internal diversity, equity, and inclusion into our strategic plan (page 3), and have implemented initiatives through our Equity Action Plan to make real and lasting change. Because of your steadfast support, we've met the demands of the past year and intensified our commitment to PPLM's mission. Thank you for your generosity during the difficult days of 2020, and thank you for standing with PPLM. Here's to a new year of continued progress toward equitable access to sexual and reproductive health care for everyone in Massachusetts – no matter what.

Jennifer Childs-Roshak, MD  
President and CEO

## advocate spotlight: Patients Speak Out for Abortion Access

The Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund's (PPAF's) Speakers Bureau trains volunteer patient advocates to publicly share their experiences with sexual and reproductive health care to break the silence and stigma that can surround such care. Sharing stories combats isolation and fear and encourages understanding, which lays the groundwork for meaningful advocacy and change.

Kate C., a volunteer speaker, believes whole-heartedly in the power of storytelling. "In 2012, I was happily expecting the birth of my second daughter. But at 35 weeks, I received a disastrous prenatal diagnosis." Because of Massachusetts' medically unnecessary restrictions, Kate had

to travel across the country to access safe, legal abortion – a journey marked by desperation and grief.

Called to activism after her experience, Kate joined PPAF's Speakers Bureau. She began telling the very personal story of "being kicked out of Massachusetts in my crisis" to reporters, supporters, activists, and other audiences. Most recently, Kate has been advocating for the ROE Act and allowing abortion after 24 weeks in cases of fatal fetal diagnosis. Testifying before a state legislative committee, she said: "It doesn't have to be this way in Massachusetts. Please vote to care for our own here at home."

Storytellers like Kate helped



reform the law, and now patients can access abortion in Massachusetts when faced with a tragic diagnosis (page 1). Kate feels empowered to do more; she believes in storytelling as an agent of change. Bolstered by a powerful sense of purpose, she affirms, "Every step in the right direction is worth taking."

# program spotlight

## ***Disrupting Disparities, Advancing Equity: PPLM Builds Equity From the Ground Up***

On October 28, PPLM's annual President's Society Conference virtually brought together more than 50 philanthropic leaders from across Massachusetts. In her opening remarks, Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak, PPLM president and CEO, reaffirmed PPLM's commitment to advance equitable access to sexual and reproductive health care, free from structural barriers, stigma, and the ravages of systemic racism.

Four PPLM staff members leading this work under the umbrella of PPLM's strategic plan, *Disrupting Disparities, Advancing Equity*, spoke about their work to improve equity across the organization and within local communities.

**Brenda Hernandez**, PPLM vice president of equity and engagement, is a lawyer experienced in fostering institutional diversity and inclusion. Brenda described PPLM's objective to become a more just, equitable, and inclusive organization that accurately represents its patients and respects its staff. To achieve this goal, PPLM is building an internal "culture of belonging" that includes all voices and ensures that PPLM's workforce and leadership reflect the communities they serve. **"Equity must underpin everything we do – it is the responsibility of everyone in the organization."**



**Liz Higgins**, CNP and director of clinical services, described how telehealth has reduced health inequities and expanded access to care for patients otherwise constrained by lack of transportation and childcare, by disabilities, by stigma, and by being at high risk

for COVID-19. Patients share that they appreciate their expanded options: in-person appointments as needed, confidential video conference appointments, and telephone appointments for those who lack video access. **"At PPLM, we strive to provide safe and equitable care to our patients, whatever their location or circumstances."**

**Adriana Ojeda** is the manager of PPLM's Worcester-based Sexual Health Ambassadorship Program (SHAP). Latino/a/x and Hispanic youth in Worcester face extreme health disparities. Adriana described PPLM's creation and launch of SHAP, a staff-supported collective of volunteer Latino/a/x and Hispanic leaders, caregivers, parents, and organizers. These volunteers build community and raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health issues and how to access care in a wide range of community settings. **"The SHAP model has potential to reduce health disparities not only in Worcester, but in communities statewide."**



**Shanique Spalding**, manager of mobilization and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and Other People of Color) organizing in Springfield, works with community partners in western Massachusetts to improve health equity and outcomes, especially among young people.

Shanique described the program's local activities, which include online workshops about contraception, events featuring Black-owned businesses, and presentations to college students about state legislation to improve health care access and advance reproductive justice. **"I take a personal approach to this work. I ask myself: 'What would I have needed as a young person growing up in this region?'"**

**"We've been able to embark on this important journey and approach our work differently and more holistically because of you. You have encouraged, trusted, and empowered us to meet this moment. Thank you."**

- Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak, PPLM president and CEO

# familiar faces & virtual spaces



## Celebration of Choices

We hope you will join us this spring for a virtual Celebration of Choices, the annual gala in support of the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund of Massachusetts. Details to come!



**Top:** Members of the Young Friends of PPLM at a virtual mixer in November.  
**Middle:** PPAF supporters at a virtual phone bank for the ROE Act this fall.  
**Left:** U.S. Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) and PPAF President Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak at a press conference denouncing the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the U.S. Supreme Court in September.



## The FY20 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/FY20AR](https://www.pplm.org/FY20AR)

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