

## Access to Contraception: Provider Perspective



Natasha Moustache

Alison Swift Packard is a PPLM board member, an obstetrician/gynecologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, and a faculty member at Harvard Medical School. We recently caught up with Dr. Packard to talk about the current landscape surrounding access to affordable birth control here in Massachusetts and nationwide.

**You're a health care provider and a dedicated supporter of PPLM. What's your most important priority right now?**

**ASP:** My passion is contraception. It's the single greatest social determinant for women everywhere, especially teens. Access to birth control enables women to shape their own futures, while unintended pregnancies can derail lives and erode the health of our communities.

**Describe what "access to contraception" means to the patients you see every day.**

**ASP:** My patients want – and deserve – to see providers without having to wait weeks for appointments. They want complete, accurate information about their birth control options. And they want to be able to take advantage of the best methods without prohibitive copays or out-of-pocket costs.

**How have patients reacted to efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and its guarantee of access to preventive health care, including birth control?**

**ASP:** Since the November election, PPLM has seen an amazing surge in the number of women coming in for birth control. Specifically, PPLM has seen a 40% increase in visits for IUD insertions and other forms of long-acting, reversible contraception (LARC). These patients fear that access to free birth control will be abruptly rescinded. That would mean that patients choosing a LARC, which is one of the safest, most effective options available, would incur steep fees. Those choosing short-term methods, like pills, could experience copays of up to \$30 to \$60 each month, a real financial burden for many.

**What is PPLM doing to protect and improve access to contraception in Massachusetts?**

**ASP:** PPLM and its political arm, Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund (PPAF), are strongly advocating for our state lawmakers to pass a bill that would guarantee zero copay birth control, and other benefits, even if the federal ACA is repealed. It's called *An Act Relative to Advancing Contraceptive and Economic Security in our State*, or the ACCESS bill, and it would require Massachusetts insurers to cover all FDA-approved forms of birth control without copays.

**What's the long-term impact of this kind of advocacy?**

**ASP:** These issues are not going to go away. PPLM and PPAF know that Massachusetts has to step up and become a leader in the national fight to protect our reproductive rights, whatever national political climate prevails.

*More than 55 million women – including 1.4 million women in Massachusetts – now have guaranteed access to affordable birth control thanks to the ACA's no copay birth control benefit. The Trump administration plans to bring us back to a time when women across the country could be denied insurance coverage for birth control on a whim by their employer. That's why Massachusetts needs the Contraceptive ACCESS bill! Visit [ppaction.org/BirthControlMA](http://ppaction.org/BirthControlMA) for more information.*

# ceo's corner

Dear Friends,

Like so many of you, I've spent the past several months on the move - marching, speaking to colleagues and friends, calling and visiting lawmakers, and organizing the next wave of action in our fight to protect access to sexual and reproductive health care.

## OUR DETERMINATION PAID OFF:

**Governor Baker publicly pledged to protect health care access for our patients** just two days after I met with him to explain that so-called "defunding" schemes could possibly block thousands of MassHealth patients from turning to PPLM for lifesaving preventive care like birth control, cancer screenings, and STD testing and treatment.

**Thousands came out to the Stand with Planned Parenthood Rally in Boston**, where our community partners, elected officials, patients, and staff affirmed the critical role PPLM plays in building a healthy Massachusetts [see next page].

**Despite House Republicans narrowly passing the American Health Care Act – the worst piece of legislation for women in a generation – our voices**

**are being heard.** Our nationwide grassroots opposition defeated House Republicans' first attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act and "defund" Planned Parenthood. We remain steadfast in our commitment to defeat this latest attempt to repeal the ACA in the Senate.

Thanks to your support, PPLM has been leading the way to successes like these. You've made generous gifts, you've volunteered, you've showed up at events and rallies, and you are coming to our five health centers in record numbers to receive our expert care. Thank you! Let's keep moving forward – no matter what.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jen".

Jennifer Childs-Roshak, MD, MBA

## advocate spotlight: Jen Slonaker

Congratulations to PPLM's Vice President of Education and Training Jen Slonaker, who recently received Massachusetts Public Health Association's prestigious Alfred Frechette Award. The award, named for a past Massachusetts health commissioner, is given annually "to a person, age 40 or younger, of high accomplishment and promise in the health field." The MPHA award especially recognizes "leadership and passion," two qualities that Jen Slonaker has in seemingly limitless supply.



A PPLM staff member since 2005, Jen and her energetic team have created and launched a range of award-winning sex education programs for youth

and adults. Just one example is PPLM's *Get Real: Comprehensive Sex Education That Works* curriculum which, after 10 years of development, is now offered in schools, youth programs, and public health departments in 29 states. That means over 200,000 middle and high school students nationwide receive medically accurate, age-appropriate information, while learning the social and emotional skills necessary for healthy relationships and responsible decision making.

While "deeply honored" by the MPHA award, Jen is hardly one to rest on her laurels. Next up? "We're working on a mobile web site for parents on which they can engage in family activities and access information related to the sex education lessons their children receive in the classroom. And we just had our first international sale of the *Get Real* curriculum, which will be implemented in Ecuador!"

## Advocacy, Action, Access!

Saturday, March 4, was a bitterly cold day. But despite the frigid temperatures, thousands of people gathered on the Boston Common to stand up and speak out for PPLM. Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak, PPLM's president and CEO, welcomed the crowd by affirming that "everyone – no matter what their zip code, race, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity or income is – deserves access to high-quality, affordable health care." Congresswoman Katherine Clark, Congressman Joe Kennedy, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, and other officials each came to the stage to voice their strong commitments to Planned Parenthood.

These speakers' assertions were followed by first-hand accounts from patients, who spoke about the life-changing care they received at Planned Parenthood. Two of those patients are now staff members, serving as health care assistants (HCAs) at PPLM's Boston Health Center:

**Cheyanne S.** was a Boston University biology major when she first sought care at PPLM. Unsure about what to expect, she had "an overwhelmingly pleasant experience...I left feeling empowered to make my own decisions about my health care." Cheyanne had been volunteering in Peer Health Exchange, teaching a health curriculum to high school students. Her PPLM patient experience intensified her interest in public health and led to her current position, where she "is happy to be part of the process of getting patients the care they need." After two-and-a-half years at PPLM, Cheyanne's commitment to providing care has deepened, and she is considering nursing school.

**Christian K.** became a Planned Parenthood patient while living in Texas. Without health insurance, Christian turned to a local Planned Parenthood health center for birth control and other care. When a painful urinary tract infection struck, she got a same-day appointment and left the center "with a diagnosis and a prescription for an antibiotic"

at no cost. But she had to walk past protestors who yelled at her, an experience that made her realize what so many women have to endure. When she moved to Boston, Christian volunteered as a clinic escort and a Counseling & Referral Hotline volunteer; now, as an HCA, she helps abortion patients

**"Everyone – no matter what their zip code, race, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity or income is – deserves access to high-quality, affordable health care."**

prepare for their procedures. "PPLM's nonjudgmental approach to care helps patients navigate the stigma surrounding abortion and other reproductive health services." Christian cares deeply about her work "because PPLM is compassionate and inclusive." Currently halfway through her nurse practitioner program, Christian is intent on bringing these values to her career.

**Cheyanne and Christian's stories were highlights of the rally, an event that underscored PPLM's powerful community presence and dedication in the face of relentless attacks. Many challenges lie ahead. As Jen Childs-Roshak reminded the audience, "This is a marathon, not a sprint. Keep showing up!"**



From left to right: Cheyanne S. and Christian K. speaking at the Planned Parenthood rally on the Boston Common

# faces & places

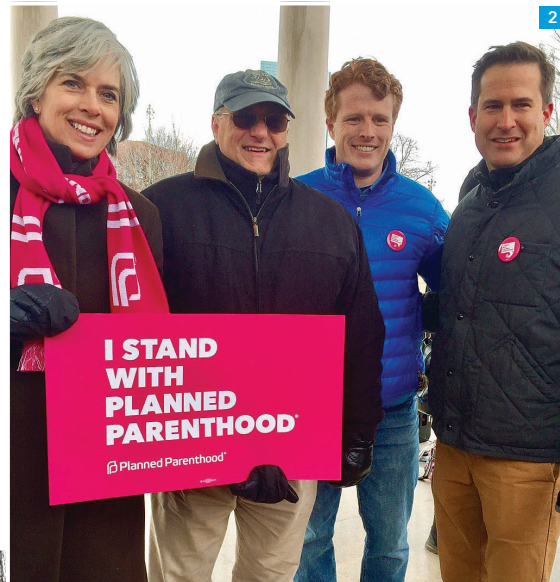


## Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Partners Award

The Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Massachusetts and Partners in Perinatal Health have recognized PPLM with the 2017 *Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Partners Award*. PPLM received the award for its “steadfast commitment to protecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health, outreach and education, and [their] relentless advocacy to ensure quality health care for all.”

At PPLM, we work to provide every woman and family with the tools they need to take charge of their health, plan their futures, and fully pursue their educational and economic opportunities. We’re honored by this recognition and are more committed than ever to help women, children, and families build healthy futures.

Images (clockwise from top): **1.** Sandy Urie and Frank Herron (co-chairs), Dr. Willie Parker (keynote speaker), Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak (president), Martha Coakley (honoree), Landis Becker Young and Brace Young (co-chairs) at the 2017 Celebration of Choices gala; **2.** Congresswoman Katherine Clark, Congressman Michael Capuano, Congressman Joe Kennedy, III, Congressman Seth Moulton at the PPAF Rally; **3.** Get Real Teen Council Member at the Boston Women’s March; **4.** Planned Parenthood supporters gathered for PPAF Rally. (Image Credits: Image 1, Joe Makarski; Image 2, Congresswoman Clark; Image 3, Nina Gallant; Image 4, Adrienne Mathiowetz)



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