

SUMMER/FALL 2022

HORIZONS

A Publication of Planned Parenthood South Texas



We're here for good.

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*We provide and protect the
health care and information
people need to plan their
families and their futures.*

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THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS

The work of Planned Parenthood South Texas is made possible by support from you and from institutional partners, including:



"Serving Humanity to Honor God"



TIMELINE:

Planned Parenthood South Texas: Here for the community, before Roe v. Wade – and after.

Message from the Board Chair

The Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* was devastating,

but then again, Planned Parenthood South Texas has never enjoyed a friendly political environment.

We started offering family planning services in 1939, but two and a half decades would pass before the Supreme Court finally recognized a right to contraception.

The 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* hardly put an end to the challenges we faced. During the nearly half-century that decision stood, the Texas Legislature continually enacted laws to restrict access to abortion. One such law, passed in 2013, required that abortion care be delivered in a surgery center – even when the procedure was non-surgical. We did not despair. We built a surgery center.

In early 2021, the state took away our Medicaid funding. In the fall, Senate Bill 8, the Texas law that banned abortions after about six weeks, took effect. We pressed on and managed

to provide care to more patients than we had the previous year.

Now, the Supreme Court has reversed *Roe* and for the first time, taken away a constitutional right. *Dobbs* represents a historic setback for reproductive freedom, and at least one justice wants the court to reconsider whether individuals have a right to practice birth control! But as it always has, PPST will endure.

In 2021, more than 25,000 South Texans looked to us for an array of services... The various forms of contraception we delivered provided nearly 400,000 weeks of protection from unplanned pregnancy.

PPST will endure because it is needed.

In 2021, more than 25,000 South Texans looked to us for an array of services. The value of charity care we delivered reached nearly \$2 million. The various forms of contraception we delivered provided

nearly 400,000 weeks of protection from unplanned pregnancy. We also offered STI testing, cancer screenings, gynecology exams, pregnancy testing, primary care, referrals for mammograms and prenatal care, and gender-affirming hormone therapy.

PPST will endure because it is supported.

The donations we received in 2021 exceeded our

TIMELINE:

1939: *The Maternal Health Center opens in a small adobe structure in San Antonio. Its goal is to reduce infant and maternal mortality and ensure women have children only when they are physically, financially and emotionally prepared to care for them. In its first year, it serves 354 women.*

A PATIENT'S STORY:

"The staff was wonderful! Considerate, kind, and informative. The appointment was a huge relief and the Dr. educated me on my situation and I happily left knowing she knew exactly what was going on. She listened and made me feel comfortable."



budgeted expectations by over 100%. Our annual luncheon, to be held on September 23, has been sold out for months. And the support we receive is much more than financial. Quickly organized events following the leak of the draft Dobbs opinion in May and the release of the final decision in June drew scores of women and men who energetically support PPST and its mission.

PPST will endure because it is a well-run organization. We efficiently operate seven clinics in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley, with a

brand-new facility scheduled to open at year-end. Many services are now available through telehealth. Our staff is professional and compassionate, and our management is thoughtfully far-sighted.

On the topic of management, this summer, the long-planned retirement date for CEO and President Jeffrey Hons arrived. We bid farewell to Jeffrey with gratitude for his 23 years of extraordinary leadership and for the strength of the organization he leaves behind. In turn, we welcome Jeffrey's successor, Laura Terrill, who joins us from Montana's Planned Parenthood affiliate. During the search process, I had several opportunities to meet with Laura, and **I am confident we are in good hands for the years ahead.**

For the time being, the Supreme Court and the Legislature will keep us from providing abortion care in Texas. As we fight for the restoration of that right, the services we continue to provide are more essential than ever. **We will endure. We always have.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Merritt Clements".

Merritt Clements
PPST Board Chair

TIMELINE:

1946: *The center in San Antonio changes its name to Planned Parenthood of San Antonio. By mid-century, the services have expanded beyond birth control to infertility counseling, cancer and tuberculosis detection, syphilis testing, and more.*

Planned Parenthood South Texas after Roe

The Supreme Court's egregious decision has devastating consequences even beyond the total loss of legal abortion in Texas.

Extremists are using pre-Roe laws like a bludgeon to demolish the navigation pathways that Planned Parenthood South Texas, abortion funds, and other reproductive rights organizations worked so hard to establish after the state's six-week abortion ban in fall 2021.

Practically speaking, this means that Texans can no longer get surgical abortions or abortion pills in the state, and that many **medical professionals, patient advocates and even caring private individuals can no longer provide logistical or financial support for abortion without risking imprisonment.**

On June 24, PPST paused all abortion services (surgical and medication) as we review with legal counsel to understand what the Supreme Court decision means for abortion access in Texas.

At our health centers that receive Title X federal family planning funding – our Harlingen clinic, our Brownsville clinic, and our Marbach and Southeast clinics in San Antonio – we are able to provide referral information for abortion care to patients. Because federal law supersedes state law, we must follow the regulations of this federal funding, which not only allows but requires us to offer pregnant patients the opportunity to be provided with information, counseling, and referrals upon request for their pregnancy options.



TIMELINE:

1966: The first Planned Parenthood in the Lower Rio Grande Valley opens in Brownsville; a clinic later opens in Harlingen. These clinics join the Planned Parenthood South Texas family in 2010.



OUR BODIES OUR CHOICE

Abortion referrals may include providing a patient with factual information about an abortion provider out of state. However, we can't schedule an appointment for the patient, book travel, provide financial assistance for transportation and lodging, or otherwise provide the logistical or financial assistance we had been providing since the six-week ban in September. At health centers that do not receive this funding, staff can only provide patients with the website abortionfinder.org.

Beyond abortion

Make no mistake – the loss of legal abortion is outrageous, morally wrong, and harmful to the communities we serve.

But Planned Parenthood is about so much more than abortion. In 2021, PPST served 25,667 patients and provided 2,535 abortions. That means more than 90% of our patients needed services other than abortion care.

The majority of patients received birth control, as well as STI testing and treatment, cervical cancer screenings and

prevention, clinical breast exams, male sexual health exams, gender-affirming hormone therapy, primary care services, and much more.

In fact, without abortion, our work becomes even more vital. It has never been more important to prevent unintended pregnancy.

Anti-abortion zealots hope the Supreme Court decision will cause our clinics to close. They're wrong. We're here for good.

- Across Texas, we are already seeing a sharp increase in demand for birth control. This is our wheelhouse. PPST is ready to meet the demand, with a **full range of contraceptive methods** to help patients find and afford the method that's best for them.
- At our health centers in the Rio Grande Valley and at our Marbach and Southeast health centers in San Antonio, **birth control is free** for anyone living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, and minors can access birth control without parental consent.

TIMELINE:

1973: *The landmark Roe v. Wade ruling affirms the right to legal abortion. Texas does not repeal any of its anti-abortion laws that Roe rendered unconstitutional. Planned Parenthood in San Antonio does not yet provide abortion care but helps patients access this care at other providers.*



ABORTIONS

- PPST health centers will provide over-the-counter **emergency contraception** at no cost to patients beginning Sept. 1. Also known as the morning-after pill, this form of EC can prevent pregnancy if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex.
- Construction on a beautiful **new health center** on San Antonio's far West side is nearing the midway point. This health center will allow us to serve more patients seeking pregnancy prevention.
- In many rural areas in South Texas, it's difficult or impossible to find affordable, effective birth control. PPST provides **telehealth** visits so patients can access contraception wherever they are, and financial assistance is available for those who qualify.
- Habla Con Tu Hermana promotoras in the Rio Grande Valley provide **science-based information** and education about birth control options to underserved people and help navigate them to a Planned Parenthood clinic for care at no cost to them.

Many supporters have asked what they can do to help during this difficult time. A few suggestions:

- Donate to PPST to support our work preventing the need for abortion.
- Donate to abortion funds to help people get the care they need out of state (go to AbortionFunds.org).
- Direct people in need of abortions to AbortionFinder.org.
- Contact your elected officials to indicate your support for reproductive rights, and contact your district attorney about the importance of not prosecuting people under these laws.
- Share your abortion story with Planned Parenthood or with the hashtag **#shoutyourabortion** on Twitter.
- Go to LilithFund.org to learn about joining the Texas Abortion Hype Squad.
- Learning how to destigmatize abortion care with Avow's Let's Talk About Abortion Toolkit (go to avowtexas.org).
- **Exercise your right to vote.**

TIMELINE:

1980s: Through testing and education, Planned Parenthood in San Antonio is a leader in combating the spread of HIV.

Meet Planned Parenthood South Texas's New President & CEO

By the time you read this, I will have begun my role as President & CEO of Planned Parenthood South Texas. As I prepare to depart Montana and join you in South Texas, **PPST patients, staff, and supporters are never far from my mind.** Neither is the outrage. Outrage for the denial of basic human rights and dignity; for the pain and suffering Texans and others will face; for the systemic manipulation of democratic institutions that led us here; for the confusion, fear, and further stigmatization being sewn into the fabric of our society by politicizing health care; and outrage that our First Amendment right to even talk with folks about abortion is threatened.

Coupled with outrage is also intense passion. **My passion for the fight for reproductive freedom began at an early age** when I came to understand the realities of what a pre-Roe era meant for women in my family who shared near-death experiences about self-managing their abortions without guidance. I was nine years old when I heard these stories and knew then I wanted to do this work. Incidentally, my mom all but patted me on the head and suggested the issue would no longer be relevant when I came of age. I am infuriated that it is.

My passion and outrage only continued to intensify as I learned Roe was not a panacea, especially for Latinx, Black, and Indigenous people and people of color; rural communities; those who are more likely to be poor; the LGBTQ+ community; and those without documentation who already face numerous barriers to the health care they need and deserve. At this pivotal moment in Texas, and in

TIMELINE:

1990s: *Extremist lawmakers begin to target reproductive rights. In 1999 alone, more than 20 abortion-related bills are introduced in the Texas legislature. Five laws that limit abortion pass into law.*

Laura Terrill joins us with more than fifteen years of experience in public administration, policy, and politics. She's worked on local and congressional campaigns and served as Chief of Staff for the Oregon Secretary of State, where she helped implement the nation's first automatic voter registration program.

She joined the Planned Parenthood family in 2012 as Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon. Most recently she served as Vice President of External Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Montana and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Montana.

Laura enjoys kayaking, hiking, landscape photography and portrait photography of the most perfect subjects: her three children and their gaggle of dogs.



our nation, **it is essential to make strategic business decisions that preserve high-quality health care service delivery while centering and supporting those most impacted by the harmful and stigmatizing attacks on our bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom.**

As I thought about this fight of our lifetimes and my role in it, I was absolutely thrilled to connect with the team at PPST and meet my incredible predecessor, Jeffrey Hons, whose legacy is evident. Advancing and protecting access to sexual and reproductive health care and education has driven my professional endeavors and, although there will be outrage, I look forward to leading the charge as we work to sustain and expand the care our community needs from us. **I also look forward to playing excellent defense and a stealth offense with a team of people who are built for this fight and continue to show up every day for our patients.** They deserve nothing less.

In this together.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Terrill".

Laura

TIMELINE:

1997: *In response to significant changes in the availability and access to abortion in San Antonio, Planned Parenthood begins offering surgical abortion care at our clinic on Babcock Road.*

A PATIENT'S STORY:

"I've never been to a Planned Parenthood clinic before, and I didn't know what to expect. This was the only clinic in my area that could see me on the same day, and the only clinic I could afford. I usually pay much more at other clinics for much lower standards of care. I had no idea Planned Parenthood had such high level of care, I'm planning to schedule my yearly exam with Planned Parenthood."

Special event: The Next Chapter

The overturning of Roe hasn't settled anything. Instead it has ignited legal fire-fights in states and courts across the country that may rage on for many years.

Against this backdrop, Planned Parenthood South Texas begins the next chapter in its 83-year mission of service with new leadership, a new clinic, new levels of support for clients and new ways to care.

We hope you will join us on September 8 to meet our new President & CEO, Laura Terrill, and to hear how Planned Parenthood South Texas will continue to be and become what our patients need us to be. She'll be welcoming very special guest Julie Murray, the Planned Parenthood Federation of

America litigator who argued SB 8 before the Supreme Court. Julie will explain the multilevel counteroffensive that reproductive rights allies are now mounting aimed at blocking and reversing abortion bans . . . one state at a time.

The path to restore abortion access is steep and narrow. Let's gather to help build the solidarity and clarity of purpose we need for the journey.

6 p.m. Thursday, September 8
The Veranda
1746 Lockhill Selma Road
San Antonio

RSVP at ppsouthtx.org/nextchapter
or email events@ppsouthtexas.org

TIMELINE:

1999-Present: *Texas lawmakers continue to pass medically unnecessary laws that reduce access to abortion or discourage abortion, such as the requirement that abortion patients be given false information that abortion raises the risk of breast cancer and other health problems; mandatory transvaginal ultrasounds; a mandatory waiting period; mandatory parental consent; and many more.*

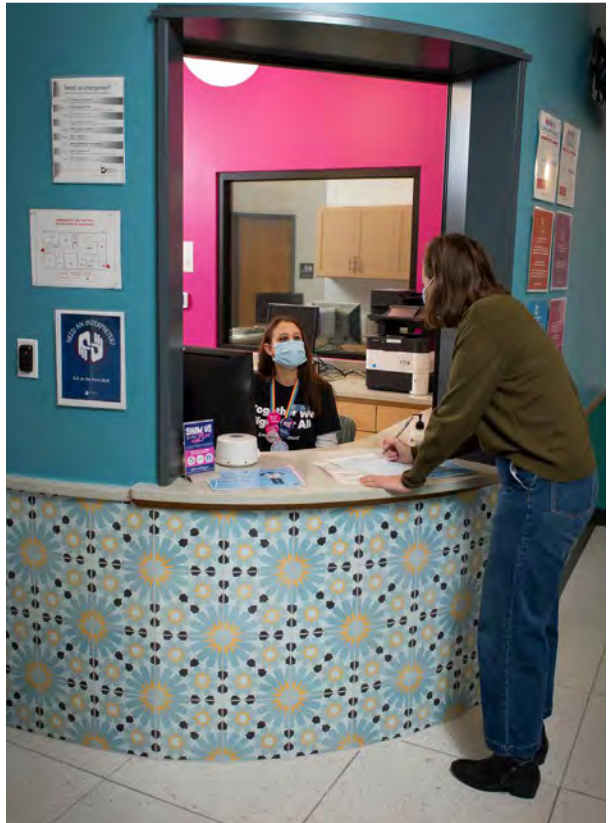
Federal family planning funding is restored to Planned Parenthood

With the continued attacks on reproductive health by the state of Texas, Planned Parenthood South Texas faces many challenges this year. But there is also much to celebrate – including the return of federal family planning funding.

The Title X federal family planning program helps low-income and uninsured people access essential health care like birth control, STI testing and treatment, and cancer screenings at low or no cost.

But in 2019, the Trump-Pence administration changed the program rules, prohibiting providers that receive this funding from even telling patients how they can access safe, legal abortion – known as the “gag rule.” Because of Trump’s directive, Planned Parenthood could no longer receive federal family planning funding, because we refused to compromise our commitment to educating pregnant patients about all their options.

Planned Parenthood had been in the Title X program since it was created nearly 50 years ago and was the program’s largest provider, serving approximately 40 percent of all Title X patients in the nation. After the Trump-Pence administration forced Planned Parenthood out, the number of patients served by Title X clinics nationwide dropped by almost 2.5 million from 2018 to 2020, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.



TIMELINE:

2000: *After the U.S. Food & Drug Administration approves medication abortion, we begin offering medication abortion at several health centers in San Antonio.*

A PATIENT'S STORY:

"I had the most wonderful experience I have ever had at a gyn appointment. The medical assistant who took my vitals and health history was very patient and thorough. I felt she really listened. Then the CNM who examined me was absolutely fantastic! Best example of informed consent and trauma informed care I've ever seen. She asked my permission to touch me at every step and explained everything very clearly. I was surprised to have her examine the sample right there in the office and provide a prescription right away. This takes days at any other provider! I plan to continue my sexual health and well woman visits at Planned Parenthood in the future."



Need quality, confidential, nonjudgmental health care?

Planned Parenthood South Texas has been caring for South Texans since 1939 and we'd like to be **your partners in health.**

Financial assistance is available to those that qualify (regardless of immigration status) to cover the full cost of some of our most popular services.

HEALTH CENTERS

Harlingen
712 North 77 Sunshine Strip
Suite 18
Harlingen, TX 78550

Brownsville
870 E. Alton Gloor Blvd.
Brownsville, TX 78526

Se habla español. Translation services for other languages available.

For virtual appointments download our app: ppsouthtexas.org/telehealth
Call **800-230-PLAN (7526)** for an appointment or go to www.ppsouthtexas.org

Care. No Matter What.

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Last year, the Biden-Harris administration overturned the Trump-era regulation, allowing Planned Parenthood organizations to receive

this funding. In March, both of PPST's health centers in the Rio Grande Valley began receiving federal family planning funding as part of a 15-month grant. And this summer, PPST's Southeast and Marbach health centers in San Antonio began receiving the funding as part of a five-year collaborative grant with other Planned Parenthood organizations in Texas.

TIMELINE:

2011: Politically motivated attacks by Texas lawmakers lead to severe funding cuts for Planned Parenthood clinics throughout the state. Heroic philanthropy from our supporters help us continue to serve low-income patients.

What does this mean for our patients?

- Patients who live at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level can receive family planning services at these clinics at no cost to them.
- Title X funding helps support health care such as birth control, STI testing and treatment, cervical cancer screenings, breast cancer screenings, pregnancy counseling, and more.
- While PPST always encourages minors to talk to a parent or trusted adult, at Title X clinics minors can obtain contraception without parental consent – which is otherwise prohibited in Texas.
- Title X clinics can purchase long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs), such as IUDs and hormonal implants, at significant discounts. This increases access to LARCs, which are highly effective and can last up to 12 years, depending on the type of device.
- **Patients can receive referrals for abortion care out of state, because Title X funding requires we inform patients about all their pregnancy options.**



“We are thrilled to once again receive federal family planning funding at some of our health centers,” said Valerie Mascorro, MBA, PPST’s Associate VP of Operations & Growth. **“The Title X program funds reproductive life planning services to low-income people who couldn’t otherwise afford it. It supports PPST’s ability to provide vital reproductive and sexual health care, sex education, and information to thousands of South Texans every year.”**

TIMELINE:

2013: Texas passes HB 2, one of the nations most restrictive laws targeting abortion, which caused dozens of abortion clinics to close across the state. In 2016, the Supreme Court overturns parts of HB 2.

Improved screening guidelines for cervical cancer

In late June, a patient came to the PPST health center in Harlingen for a pelvic exam. It didn't take long for clinician Erika Jasso to discover a problem.

"I could see she had cancer," said Jasso, a nurse practitioner in the Rio Grande Valley.

The patient soon entered a hospital with stage 4 cervical cancer. The five-year relative survival rate for advanced cervical cancer is less than 20%.

"It shows the importance of early detection, when we can prevent it from progressing," Jasso said.

Cervical cancer screening has significantly reduced new cases and deaths from the disease over the past 50 years. Screening allows providers to detect abnormal cervical cells that may lead to cancer. Then the cells can be treated to prevent the disease.

Through the decades, as researchers learn more about cervical cancer, the screening guidelines have evolved.

Long considered the most effective form of screening for cervical cancer, the Pap smear – a test that looks for abnormal cells that can lead to cancer in the cervix – is no longer recommended by leading medical

organizations as the first line of screening for the cancer.

Instead, evidence now supports the use of human papillomavirus (HPV) testing as the primary form of screening. HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection that causes virtually all cases of cervical cancer.

Planned Parenthood South Texas has long offered both Pap and HPV testing. In May, **all PPST health centers moved to HPV screening as the primary screening for cervical cancer, per new medical guidelines.**

In addition, the age to begin screening has changed. Updated guidelines recommend that patients begin receiving HPV tests every five years beginning at age 25, instead of age 21 as previously recommended.

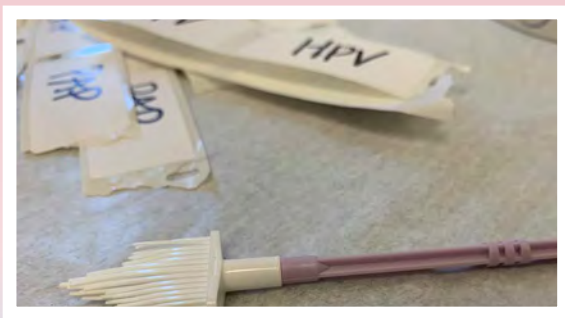
These new guidelines have been adopted by the American Cancer Society, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology.

"We are always striving to provide the best quality of care based on the latest evidence," said Polin Barraza, R.N., PPST's Senior Vice President & COO.

Evolving science

The Pap test has been an invaluable screening tool for several decades. However, research has shown that HPV tests are more accurate and more reliable than Pap smears. Because Paps have lower sensitivity, they may miss some precancers and have to be repeated more frequently.

In addition, Paps also detect minor



TIMELINE:

2015: *Our flagship facility opens in the Medical Center in San Antonio.*

A PATIENT'S STORY:

“Planned Parenthood has helped me with my reproductive health throughout my entire adulthood and my teenage years. When I was broke, depressed, alone, they helped. They have helped me get financial help for a much needed LEEP procedure that I would never have been able to afford. Planned Parenthood is essential for women and teens.”

abnormal cell changes that are not caused by HPV, so many patients who receive an abnormal Pap test result have a very low chance of developing cervical cancer.

The starting screening age has been pushed back from 21 to 25 because new studies have shown that the benefits of the screening do not outweigh the harm for people ages 21 to 24. Most HPV infections in young women go away on their own, and screening younger than age 25 often leads to unnecessary treatments that can have side effects.

Also, HPV vaccines – introduced in the United States in 2006 – have led to a drop in HPV infections in women who are now in their 20s. PPST also offers HPV vaccines as part of our Stop Cervical Cancer program.

Currently, screening is still recommended even for people who received the HPV vaccine. People ages 65 and older do not need a cervical cancer screening if a series of prior tests were normal.

How it works

The sample for HPV tests is collected the same way as the sample for a Pap test, so the patient does not experience a difference. The doctor or nurse uses a speculum to separate the walls of the vagina, then takes some cells from the cervix using a small device called a cervical broom.

PPST runs the sample in our high-complexity in-house lab. If the HPV test is positive, the lab will automatically genotype it for the HPV types that are associated with cancer.

If the test is positive for the strains linked to cervical cancer, the patient receives a Pap test. If that test is abnormal, PPST performs a colposcopy. In a colposcopy, the clinician examines the cervix with a magnifying lens and takes samples for biopsy.

Mild dysplasia (the abnormal growth of cells on the surface of the cervix) can resolve without treatment, and the patient may require only follow-up tests. Moderate or severe dysplasia requires treatment of the cells.

Patient empowerment

A crucial part of PPST's Stop Cervical Cancer program is education.

“There are still patients who don't understand how they get cervical cancer,” Jasso said. “I provide them with education about prevention and screening and the vaccine.”

While performing HPV tests every five years between ages 25 and 65 is now standard, PPST does offer patients the option of choosing to have a Pap smear every three years beginning at age 21.

They can also choose to do both a HPV test and a Pap test – called co-testing – every five years. HPV/Pap co-testing is slightly more sensitive than HPV testing alone, but it is less efficient, may detect minor changes with a very low risk of turning into cancer, and comes with extra cost.

“It's up to the patient, but we want to make sure she makes an informed decision,” Barraza said.

TIMELINE:

2019: *We begin to offer abortion care at a second location in San Antonio.*

A PATIENT'S STORY:

"I was able to get a birth control method that worked for me in the same week of calling Planned Parenthood. Other gynecologists had at least a month long wait to get a long-term contraceptive placed."



The 2022 Planned Parenthood

First Annual Valley Brunch

FEATURING **PAOLA RAMOS**

NOV
13 | **Brownsville**

**How Latinx communities are
reshaping our democracy and
expanding freedoms for everyone**



Join Planned Parenthood South Texas for brunch with author, Emmy award-winning journalist and Latinx advocate Paola Ramos in Brownsville on Sunday, November 13.

Featured on VICE News, MSNBC and Telemundo News, Ramos uplifts the voices of marginalized communities, breaks down stereotypes and mobilizes people towards civic engagement. Her book, *Finding Latinx: In Search of the Voices Redefining Latino Identity*, features poderosas in the Valley (including PPST's own lead promotora) fighting for reproductive rights.

By sponsoring this brunch, you will keep birth control, cancer screening and prevention, STD testing and treatment, primary care, gender-affirming hormone therapy and an array of other services accessible and affordable for everyone in the Rio Grande Valley. Sponsored tables of 10 available at \$1,500, \$2,500 and \$5,000 levels. Contact nubia.reyna@ppsouthtexas.org with questions or to sponsor a table.

TIMELINE:

2021: *Texas SB 8, the six-week ban, passes and goes into effect on Sept. 1, severely limiting abortion care. Planned Parenthood begins to help patients access care in other states.*

Censoring art, censoring bodies



In February, San Antonio artist Sarah Fox was disappointed to learn that the McNay Art Museum declined to exhibit a video she had created that included sexual content. The video was part of a larger exhibition of works by Sarah and seven other artists.

The video, "Bad Bunny," features animal

The marionettes, props, and drawings included in the installation satirize traditional dynamics of power and imagine new realities."

Sarah, along with several other artists who withdrew from the McNay exhibit in solidarity, showed some of their work at a gallery in the Blue Star Arts Complex in April. On April 14, Sarah opened the exhibit for a private view and gallery talk for PPST donors.

At the event, Sarah spoke about her artistic journey to express sexuality and power. Kathy Armstrong, a longtime Planned Parenthood board member and community arts advocate, and Mara

Posada, PPST's Director of Public Affairs, discussed **the parallels between the censorship of art due to sexual content and the repression of access to sexual and reproductive health care.**



puppets who meet on a dating app, go to dinner, and have sex. Fox described it this way: "In a surreal puppet show, I use humor, sexuality, and rage to push back against the policing and politicization of women's bodies.



TIMELINE:

2022: *The Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade on June 24.*

View from a young activist

I am member of Gen Z - and that means two things: I am coming of age during one of the most turbulent social and political times in our country's history, and I am doing it with a phone in my hand.

On May 2, 2022, I was in my dorm room in Washington, D.C., finishing dinner and studying with a friend when both our phones instantaneously buzzed with the same New York Times notification that a draft SCOTUS opinion in the Dobbs case had been leaked, and it spelled the end of Roe v. Wade. If true, abortion access would be under threat like never before, and many states would move quickly to ban abortion once the opinion was official. Our phones began to blow up. Texts, GroupMe, social media, news alerts - our phones flooded with panicked messages about what this meant for people who can get pregnant, and for other constitutional rights. Immediately plans were being made for protests in every major city in the country, organized and shared on social media, and the next day I was at the Supreme Court to join that force of individuals ready to fight for reproductive freedom. I was back home in San Antonio when the Dobbs decision was finally released, and again my phone was the space where the shock, anger, organizing, fundraising, and resource-sharing came together. It was jarring to see all these posts alongside Harry Styles content and ads for Doc Martens, but such is the social media feed of a GenZer.

As a born-and-raised Texan and current public policy student in Washington D.C, I have always been interested in politics. My first political rally was for Hillary Clinton during her first run for president, and I started watching presidential debates in grade school. The TV was tuned to the news every night while dinner was being made, and everyone at the table was expected to contribute to the conversation. My family has always taught me that the open exchange of ideas and being passionate about issues affecting you and those around you were values to be fostered. Even with this strong foundation, I still had a lot of learning to do about how to be politically engaged in an increasingly online world.

I was four years old when the iPhone debuted, so technology, the internet, and social media have always been a fact of my life, for better or for worse. My generation is growing up with so many options on where to access news and information, methods of communicating, ways of connecting, and means of organizing. Social media



TIMELINE:

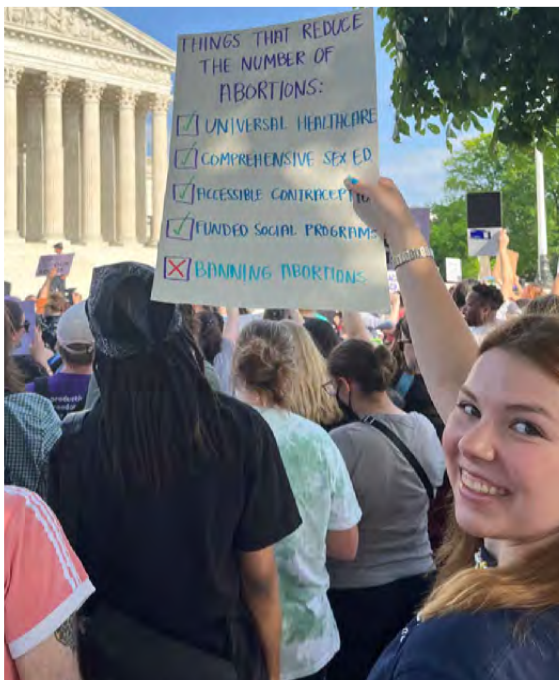
What's next: *Planned Parenthood South Texas continues to provide and protect the health care and information people need to plan their families and their futures.*

has made information so much more democratic because now news outlets, organizers, and people can communicate directly with one another without gatekeeping. But we have to make sure that the sources are reliable and we have to be careful about who we are communicating with and what we say online, because once you post something you lose control of how it can be used.

Our generation has mastered the ability to use social media and online tools like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp in creative ways. For example, I think most people who had heard of TikTok thought it was just dancing videos, but a near-empty stadium was the result of Gen Zers using TikTok to register for (and no-show) more than one million tickets to a Donald Trump rally in 2020. That's a pretty notorious example, but other tools like text banking, Instagram Live events, online fundraisers, and sharable content on social media are ways that Gen Zers are using technology to add to the more traditional ways of organizing, educating, and engaging people. An example of this is a fundraiser for Planned Parenthood South Texas I started right after the Dobbs decision was announced. I shared the link for the fundraiser on both my Facebook and Instagram accounts. In this case, social media provided a unique outlet to fundraise and raise awareness - about 25 contributors on Facebook and about 1,250 contributors on Instagram had helped me raise over \$15,000 in less than a week.

Social media allowed me to learn more about reproductive health care access and political organizing, which sparked an interest that I now study in school. I spend my summers expanding classroom knowledge as part of the Planned Parenthood South Texas community engagement team. My goal in my education and advocacy work is to use all the tools we have to reach people where they are and to engage, educate and empower them to be partners in this fight.

“My goal in my education and advocacy work is to use all the tools we have to reach people where they are and to engage, educate and empower them to be partners in this fight.”



Olivia Zachry is a rising sophomore at George Washington University and the Researcher & Community Engagement Coordinator at Planned Parenthood South Texas.

TIMELINE:

Always: Care. No matter what.



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