

December 2008

From the Desk of John W. Nugent, President & CEO

Well, the election frenzy is finally over. The dust has cleared and Barack Obama is just weeks away from being sworn in as our 44th President.

You must be thrilled to once again have a President who cares about women's health and reproductive choice. I know I am. But where we go from here as a nation and as an organization makes me cautious.

There is the potential for big changes at Planned Parenthood of Maryland.

We know that President-elect Barack Obama stands 100% behind reproductive freedom. As he said to the Planned Parenthood Action Fund on July 17, 2007:

“The first thing I'd do as President is sign the Freedom of Choice Act.”

And I hope that in his first 100 days we will see our new President come through.

As the Act is now written, women would be guaranteed the right to terminate a pregnancy when it is in their best interest. The Act would also reverse anti-choice laws already on the books in many states. In Maryland, this would include the law requiring parental notification prior to an abortion.

But with greater freedom comes concern.

Anti-choice activists are already fired up about Obama's win. We are anticipating an increase of vicious campaigns and hate filled protests.

In addition to the Freedom of Choice Act, we might also see a single payer national health insurance plan put in place. This could change the entire financial structure of Planned Parenthood of Maryland and would require careful analysis.

I am cautious about what final legislative details may look like and how Planned Parenthood, a safety net for the community, may be reimbursed.

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I want you to know that no matter what happens, we will provide the high quality care, education and advocacy that you expect of us.

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be anything in the pipeline that will fund comprehensive sex education. Thanks to 12+ years of federally funded abstinence-only education, reform is sorely needed and terribly underfunded.

With your interests (and outrage!) in mind, we have asked Governor O'Malley to refuse \$500,000 in federal abstinence-only dollars that the State would have to partially match.

And yet there is still worry.

You know our nation's economy is in crisis. And while we remain hopeful, the President-elect is inheriting a troubled economy.

State funds for family planning have remained the same for over 13 years. Now Maryland is faced with severe budget cuts that may further cut our funding. And the cost of providing care continues to rise.

This is why we are so grateful for your support and encouragement.

I am very proud to announce that our parent organization, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, granted us another very successful four-year accreditation. And I am very grateful that our dedicated employees and volunteers were recognized and rewarded for the exceptional service that they provide.

You can trust that no matter what direction our nation takes we will work even harder for you.

We are your Planned Parenthood. I thank you for all that you have done, and will continue to do, to ensure that no Marylander goes without the care they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John W. Nugent', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John W. Nugent
President & CEO

P.S. - If you want a speaker for a group or want to gather some friends in your living room to talk about the Freedom of Choice Act or other reproductive rights issues, please give us a call at 410-576-2150. I would be happy to come speak to you.