

# the Advocate

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts

summer 2021

## New Options for PPLM Patients

Recent innovations at PPLM's health centers and in sexual and reproductive health care are expanding patients' options and reducing disparities in access to care.

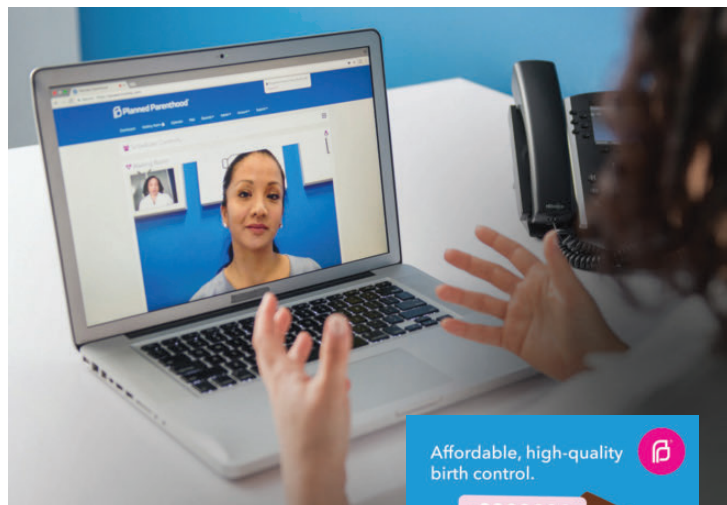
PPLM's patients can now use hormonal long-acting reversible contraception as emergency contraception. Within five days of unprotected sex, patients can now choose a hormonal IUD (Mirena or Liletta) as an emergency contraception alternative to ParaGard, the nonhormonal copper IUD.

"This is really good news for our patients," says Dr. Danielle Roncari, PPLM's medical director. "Hormonal IUDs have fewer side effects, require no backup methods, and are effective for up to seven years." This winter, PPLM also began offering the new Kyleena IUD, which delivers a lower hormonal dose with fewer side effects.

Technology offers additional good news for patients. Launched more than a year ago in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, PPLM's telehealth program continues to provide a confidential, reliable, socially distanced option for patients who otherwise might be limited by geographic distance, scheduling challenges due to work or child care responsibilities, disabilities, fear of stigma, and other circumstances. While PPLM implemented its telehealth program to provide care during the pandemic, it will remain an option for patients going forward.

Providers connect with patients via videoconference to address a range of needs, including problem-based and follow-up care, contraception consultations and prescriptions, PrEP and PEP prescriptions to prevent HIV transmissions, self-injection instruction for patients receiving gender-affirming hormone therapy, and at-home STI testing. PPLM's health centers are still open to provide other forms of care that require in-person appointments.

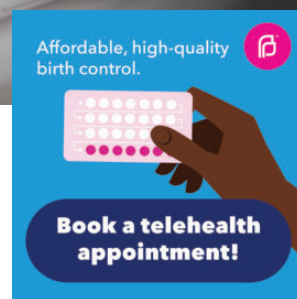
From the perspective of PPLM's providers, the benefits of telehealth go well beyond a temporary pandemic response. PPLM has seen more than 10,000 patients via telehealth. Across all health centers within the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, PPLM's



telehealth services scored in the 99th percentile for patient likelihood to recommend, a key indicator that telehealth patients are remarkably satisfied with their experiences.

To address issues of equity in telehealth access, PPLM schedules appointments by telephone for patients without a home internet connection, or who do not have safe, private places for videoconferencing. For patients who wish to consult with a practitioner in a language other than English, PPLM partners with an interpretation agency to provide translation services.

Roncari sees more innovations on the horizon. "We're looking at adding the ability to remotely capture vital signs like blood pressure and temperature via telehealth. We are working on electronic recordkeeping that efficiently integrates telehealth-derived information. Our Continuity of Care management program will enable practitioners to actively reach out to their telehealth patients with reminders, check-ins, and other follow-up care." Easier access and more options add up to greater sexual and reproductive health care equity for all.



# ceo's corner

Russ Mezikofsky



**Dear Friends,**

This past spring, I watched the changes and experienced the hope that the season brings, with trees turning green and flowers blooming. I also felt encouraged when COVID-19 vaccines became widely available, and when the police officer who murdered George Floyd was held accountable. Although we

have a long road ahead before the pandemic is under control, and an even longer journey toward racial equity and justice, we are making progress.

PPLM continues our commitment to fighting the dual public health crises of COVID-19 and persistent, systemic racism. PPLM's political arm, the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund of Massachusetts (PPAF), is advocating for a new legislative agenda, *Solidarity in Action*, that confronts these issues head on.

PPAF, in coalition with allies and community partners, is mobilizing supporters to address health disparities

faced by Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, people with low incomes, and young people. Following the reproductive justice movement's lead, PPAF is fighting for policies that support our patients at every intersection of their lives and identities; policies that make it possible for all people to raise healthy families, lead their own lives, and build strong communities. Together, these policy solutions can help people in Massachusetts achieve true reproductive freedom.

This *Advocate* describes our work that bolsters this agenda, including new care options for PPLM's patients (page 1); building community among young people (page 3); and PPAF's Black Organizing Program (page 2).

Your generous support makes our work possible. Thank you for your dedication to PPLM.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Childs-Roshak, MD  
President and CEO

## advocate spotlight: PPAF's Black Organizing Program Uplifts Leaders' Voices

The lived experiences of Black women leaders and activists took center stage at a digital panel hosted by the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund's (PPAF's) Black Organizing Program. "Black Women's Justice & Reproductive Freedom" featured State Representative Liz Miranda; former Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and PPLM Board Member Dr. JudyAnn Bigby; Tufts School of Medicine Associate Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine Dr. Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha; and Black transgender scholar and activist Dyke Gorell.

Achieving reproductive justice means confronting multiple systems of oppression that have denied Black women society's full range of services and opportunities for centuries, panelists said. As a physician, Dr. Bigby asserted that "we must validate the experiences of Black women by hearing and responding to their voices, and allowing them to lead." Rep. Miranda, one of only four Black women in the Massachusetts state legislature, discussed her leadership role in creating a special commission to eliminate racial inequities in maternal health. Dr. Amutah-Onukagha explained how her work to reduce

disparities in maternal health outcomes encompasses research, infrastructure, and policy-making, with the "intentional prioritization" of Black women's experiences. Citing the painful legacy of transphobia, Dyke Gorell emphasized the need to develop culturally competent health care systems, expand support networks, and "honor the work of activists."

PPAF's Black Organizing Program continues to build power in Massachusetts through outreach. The program's essential work supports PPAF's legislative agenda, which prioritizes eliminating maternal health disparities caused by systemic racism.



# program spotlight

## Young Supporters Stay Connected, Give Back

Throughout the pandemic, groups of dedicated young people are continuing to work with PPLM and PPAF to make change through advocacy, organizing, education, and philanthropy.

Young Friends of PPLM (YF) is a group of over 100 people ages 21 to 35 dedicated to ensuring access to quality reproductive health care and sex education. YF builds community as it works to secure vital funds that support PPLM's mission and work. Each member commits to giving \$10 or more monthly and participates in gatherings, meetings, and educational opportunities to learn more about advancing reproductive health.

During the pandemic, a popular YF event has been the monthly lunchtime virtual Coffee Chat, at which PPLM staff and attendees discuss timely topics ranging from digital advocacy, telehealth, talking with kids about sex, and LGBTQ+ health care.

"Even though we can't connect in person, our community is strong. And the monthly financial commitment keeps all of us in the habit of giving to PPLM at whatever level we can afford, which is really important for the organization's future," says Elena Gulotta, who serves on the YF Steering Committee.

Young people are also organizing to support Planned Parenthood and reproductive health at local colleges and universities. Campuses may not be as densely populated as they were pre-pandemic, but PPAF's student volunteers are still busy advocating for sexual health equity



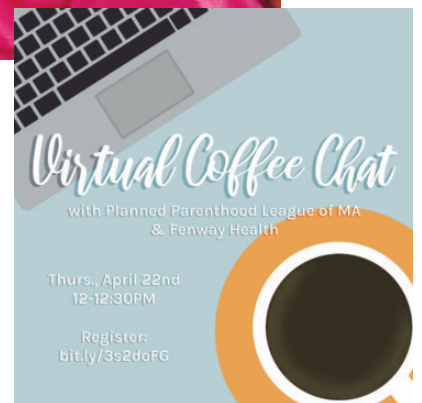
Mount Holyoke Gen Action chapter members at an event in 2019.

at their schools. As part of Planned Parenthood's Generation Action (Gen Action) initiative, chapters at nine Massachusetts colleges work with PPAF to create and launch projects that address students' sexual and reproductive health. The groups are based at large urban campuses, like Boston University, as well as liberal arts colleges like Smith, Wheaton, and Williams.

JoJo Zeitlin, a student in Mount Holyoke College's Class of 2022, co-chairs the school's Gen Action chapter. She reports that students on- and off-campus are writing letters to lawmakers; campaigning for voter registration and turnout; and participating in online educational discussions on contraception, STIs, trans rights, and sex workers' rights. The chapter also has been distributing free menstrual products and safer sex supplies to students on campus and mailing them to people studying remotely, an initiative made

possible by a grant from PPAF and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

"In the past two years, we've worked hard to raise our visibility, and our Gen Action chapter has grown from fewer than 300 students to include 1,100 Instagram followers and a mailing list of 600." Zeitlin says that next year, with more students on campus, Generation Action will continue to educate, advocate, and provide the college's community with critical resources. Says Zeitlin, "Everything we do works toward the goal of achieving reproductive justice."





# familiar faces & virtual spaces

## 2021 Celebration of Choices

Keynote speaker Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (left), 2021 honoree Dr. Luu Ireland (below), and 2020 honoree Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey (bottom left) at this year's virtual Celebration of Choices gala benefitting PPAF in May.



Thanks to everyone who attended this year's Celebration of Choices and supported PPAF's work!

Please support PPLM today by visiting [www.pplm.org/donate](http://www.pplm.org/donate) or emailing [development@pplm.org](mailto:development@pplm.org).