2019 Annual Report

FREEDOM IS FOR EVERYBODY
Dear Friends,

Two thousand nineteen was the year that we began to reap the rewards of building power, forging partnerships, and dreaming big about the future of reproductive freedom in Massachusetts. Two thousand nineteen was also the year that we put a stake in the ground and declared that, whatever happens nationally, Massachusetts will be a beacon of light for reproductive freedom.

Following the heartbreaking confirmation of Justice Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court, anti-choice state legislatures across the country passed increasingly extreme and unconstitutional laws restricting abortion access. This was a clear sign that an emboldened anti-choice movement saw Kavanaugh’s elevation to the high Court as an opportunity to gut or overturn Roe v. Wade.

In December 2019, the United States Supreme Court announced it will hear oral arguments in June Medical Services v. Gee, a case about an anti-choice law in Louisiana. The Court’s decision to review a case that is nearly identical to a case decided just three years ago is a frightening sign that the justices may be on the precipice of rolling back hard-won fundamental freedoms protecting the right to choose.

Our anger and fear in the face of the existential threat to reproductive freedom has evolved into clarity and confidence that we can take back our power and do something truly transformative for the lives of Bay Staters. That is why, in 2018, we sat with our coalition partners and created the blueprint for the ROE Act. This visionary bill will not only protect access to abortion in the Commonwealth, it will remove unnecessary barriers to accessing abortion care—barriers that disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color. Abortion is health care, and the ROE Act will finally align our laws with that simple fact.

In 2019, we gained tremendous ground in the fight to turn the ROE Act into law. In these pages, you will read about our commitment to advancing reproductive freedom in the Commonwealth. In January, our coalition brought more than 400 people to the State House for a Lobby Day in support of the ROE Act. In June, a hearing on the bill drew more than 700 supporters and opened the door for powerful testimony from young people, healthcare providers, the business community, faith leaders, and more. In October, we produced four digital ads on the ROE Act that were seen by millions of people across the Commonwealth. We rallied, we educated, we advocated, we created new partnerships and coalitions. And we aren’t done yet.

It is with pride and gratitude that I share these 2019 accomplishments, and it is thanks to your continued commitment that we are able to be bolder and push harder in 2020. Our agenda is audacious: we will stand up to an anti-choice administration that peddles inflammatory lies and rhetoric and pronounce, for the rest of the country to hear, “not in Massachusetts.”

Onward!

Rebecca Hart Holder
Executive Director
NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts & the Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation
January
We kicked off the fight to make the ROE Act a reality. Starting with Sexual Health Lobby Day, hundreds of Bay Staters flooded the State House to speak with their legislators about our priority legislation this session. As a result of this direct constituent lobbying, 21 state senators and 89 state representatives co-sponsored the ROE Act.

Later in January, 30 NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts (NPCM) staff, volunteers, and supporters joined thousands of Bay Staters on Boston Common to raise our voices against the Trump Administration. Executive Director Rebecca Hart Holder addressed the crowd alongside our partners at the ACLU of Massachusetts and Planned Parenthood of Massachusetts, highlighting the ROE Act.

February
We brought together two crucial groups of activists: college students and our “Bad Old Days Posse,” individuals who remember a time when abortion was illegal. Intergenerational knowledge sharing is crucial for the advancement of our movement.

March
In collaboration with national and local partners, NPCM held a legislator-only briefing on the ROE Act to provide lawmakers with key information and evidence about the ROE Act’s importance and timeliness.

NPCM launched a viral digital ad campaign to raise awareness and support for the ROE Act. Published on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, the ads reached millions of people across the state.
April
Abortion access is about more than reproductive rights. It is an economic issue, a workers’ rights issue, an LGBTQ+ issue, and a social justice issue. A lack of access deeply impacts our families and communities. In April, we launched the ROE Act Coalition—a group of more than 70 organizations, including healthcare organizations, labor unions, faith-based organizations, and elected officials working together to make the ROE Act a reality.

In addition, the Lift the Cap on Kids coalition, of which we are a part, scored a major legislative victory in April when both the House and Senate voted to override the Governor’s veto of the repeal of the Cap on Kids, striking this racist law from our books once and for all.

May
The Trump administration implemented new restrictions on the Title X federal family planning program, preventing grant recipients from providing unbiased counseling for people facing an unintended pregnancy and referrals for abortion care. In response, the Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation (PCMF) launched an updated Guide to Abortion Care in Massachusetts both in-print and online, and in English and Spanish. This critical resource answers common questions about abortion, directs patients to abortion care providers, and warns of fake women’s health centers. It is the only such guide to exist in Massachusetts and puts medically-accurate, unbiased healthcare information in the hands of every Bay Stater.

June
The Joint Committee on the Judiciary held a hearing on the ROE Act with more than 700 Bay Staters showing up to support reproductive freedom. This was our opportunity to bring multiple stakeholders in front of the Committee, a critical step in making the ROE Act law. NPCM’s coalition partners, health care providers, young people, people who experienced the devastating diagnosis of a lethal fetal anomaly, members of the business community, and faith leaders came together to make the case for the bill. At the hearing, Attorney General Maura Healey became the first constitutional officer to endorse the bill.

Fostering partnerships with elected officials is crucial to our work, and the Elected for Choice event is our opportunity to honor those who lead on reproductive rights. Our 2019 honorees were Representative Jay Livingstone and Boston City Councilor Michelle Wu.

June also saw an endorsement for the ROE Act from a local champion turned federal fighter: Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley.
In addition to fighting back against abortion restrictions, NPCM is also dedicated to ending the national epidemic of maternal mortality which disproportionately impacts women of color. An Act to Reduce Racial Disparities in Maternal Health (S.1334, H.1949) is a bill that would create a commission to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature that address this injustice. In September, this bill had a hearing before the Joint Committee on Public Health.

The month ended on a high-note at the Massachusetts Democratic Party convention in Springfield. Rebecca Hart Holder kicked off the morning addressing attendees at a breakfast in support of Senator Ed Markey, where she spoke about the importance of electing reproductive rights champions. Later that day, the ROE Act achieved another major milestone when the party overwhelmingly approved a resolution that called for its immediate passage.

With endorsements from 17 mayors across Massachusetts, leaders in organized labor, and the Massachusetts Medical Society, the ROE Act is positioned as the best response to anti-choice restrictions across the country. It is especially timely, as that very same month the Supreme Court announced it would take up the first abortion rights case of the Kavanaugh era.

Later in October, NPCM launched a viral video campaign, highlighting the voices of patients, providers, parents, and elected officials who are advocating for the ROE Act. Each video tells a story from a different perspective on why the ROE Act is so important to Bay Staters. The videos directed viewers to contact their legislators and were viewed more than a million times.
In a record-breaking year for our annual fundraiser, Champions for Choice, we honored Congresswoman Katherine Clark and Dr. Luu Ireland for their incredible work in defense of reproductive freedom. We also presented the Ellen Paradise Fisher Award for Activism in Action to Dr. Smita Carroll, a physician and abortion provider who represents the next generation of our fight.

December

Two thousand nineteen was a year of building momentum and strength toward making lasting change for Massachusetts. NPCM is dedicated to protecting and expanding reproductive freedom in our state and has laid the groundwork for a bold 2020 agenda. We will see the ROE Act become law. We will continue to elect champions to the State House. We will not stop until Massachusetts is a national leader in reproductive freedom.

November

NPCM and our coalition partners held an advocacy day at the State House to urge legislators to support the ROE Act. Punctuated by a strong showing of 200 activists and volunteers, constituents from Pittsfield to Cape Cod held meetings with their elected officials about the importance of the ROE Act. The day boasted an impressive speaking lineup that included labor leaders from the Boston Teachers Union and SEIU 32BJ, healthcare professionals, civil rights and social justice advocates, Tania Del Rio, who spoke on behalf of Mayor Marty Walsh and the City of Boston, and Rabbi Liz Hirsch from Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield. This diverse group of supporters shared how important reproductive freedom is to the work they do, highlighting the intersectionality of our fight.
successful coalition advocacy days at the State House in support of the ROE Act.

volunteer events including phone banks, organizing meetings, rallies, and marches.

endorsements of the ROE Act by labor unions, provider groups, faith-based groups, and advocacy groups.

meetings with legislators conducted by NPCM staff.

copies of A Guide to Abortion Care in Massachusetts disseminated.

legislator contacts in support of the ROE Act.

people reached through viral ads in support of the ROE Act.
Dear Friends,

I am very excited to report that this past year we started the Bad Old Days Posse, a group of older women who share what it was like before Roe v. Wade. I’ve been an abortion activist since 1969, when I was part of the group that started MORAL, the Massachusetts Organization to Repeal Abortion Laws, the predecessor organization to NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts. Mistakenly, after Roe v. Wade, we thought that we had won this important battle for women’s rights and autonomy. We were wrong. And as it became more and more apparent that we could go back to the bad old days (indeed that in many parts of the country, it was the bad old days), I decided that those of us who had lived through it needed to speak up and let people know how bad it really was.

Our Bad Old Days group is quite varied. Some of us had illegal abortions before Roe; some had legal abortions afterwards; some did not need this procedure. Many of us have done abortion counseling, both before and after Roe, and been activists on this and other issues. We all recognize that knowing how important reproductive choice is intellectually is not the same as having lived with the fear and consequences that women faced before Roe. Generations who have grown up believing that they always had and always will have choice are astonished when we talk about the underground networks, the deaths, mutilations, sepsis, and guilt that marred our lives. If you don’t know what you could lose, you don’t fight to keep it.

So, Posse members speak whenever and wherever we can. We’ve spoken to legislators and urge everyone to make Massachusetts safe for reproductive rights by passing the ROE Act. We’ve spoken to student groups who have no real sense about what it was like back in the day and are astonished to hear about the lengths women went to get abortions and birth control.

We invite those interested in joining us to come to our meetings and speak out! And we encourage those interested in hosting our speakers to contact NPCM, and we’d be delighted to come to your group.

Join the fight! Protect abortion!

Thanks,

Carol Deanow
Developing Future Leaders

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts and the Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation are proud to work with high school, college, and graduate students. Here are two students who are making their marks in the reproductive rights movement.

Halle Jeremie

Halle Jeremie continued her work with NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts as our Development Intern in 2019. A double major in Africana Studies and Political Science at Simmons University, Halle’s long-held beliefs that democracy and law are the most effective tools for achieving equality and justice, as well as her desire to break down stigmas associated with abortion, are what led her to continue her work with NPCM. This year, she played an integral role in the execution of Champions for Choice, our most successful fundraiser to date. Halle regularly assists in day-to-day fundraising and development operations and supports efforts to identify and attract new potential donors. In addition to her successes with NPCM, Halle’s academic pursuits have been equally exciting and impressive. She studied abroad in Argentina to research infant nutrition and breastfeeding and is in the process of completing a thesis about the portrayal of black women in the media. After college, she plans on attending law school.

Allison Craven Fernandez

Allison Craven Fernandez is a sophomore at Suffolk University studying Government with a concentration in American Politics. Her passion for reproductive rights stems from her experience as a teenager in Mansfield, Massachusetts, a community with limited access to birth control and a public school system that did not teach comprehensive sexual education. From a young age, Allison believed that it is wrong to politicize women’s health care. In fall 2019, motivated by the rash of anti-abortion policies across the country, as well as her desire to help fellow classmates be informed about reproductive rights, Allison launched Suffolk Pro-Choice, a NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts campus affiliate. Her immediate hopes for the new chapter are to rally student support for the ROE Act, host speaking events for the “Bad Old Days Posse,” and continue to build positive momentum through social media. Allison does not yet know what her professional future holds, but she is excited to be working as a legislative intern for Senator Markey this coming spring.
Looking Ahead

The next 12 months are crucial to the reproductive freedom movement in Massachusetts and across the country. The current political landscape is not an abyss. It is an opportunity for victory. Two thousand twenty will be the year we capitalize on our opportunities and momentum. We aim to:

- Pass the ROE Act, removing existing barriers and expanding access to abortion care in Massachusetts.
- Fight back against anti-choice efforts to chip away at reproductive freedom in Massachusetts.
- Mobilize voters, activists, and supporters to speak out about abortion access.
- Support reproductive freedom champions running for office in critical state elections.

Join Us

The critical work of NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts and the Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation would not be possible without your activism and support. Here are a few ways to help us move the mission forward in 2020!

Mail a check or give online at prochoicemass.org
Become a monthly supporter
Give the gift of stock
Throw a houseparty
Sign up to volunteer
NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is a state affiliate of NARAL Pro-Choice America and is the political grassroots arm of the pro-choice movement in Massachusetts. Our mission is to develop and sustain a grassroots constituency that uses the political process to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing safe, legal, and accessible abortion.

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, Inc. is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization founded in 1972. While not tax-deductible, a donation to NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is the best way to effect political change.

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation is the research and education arm of our movement. The Foundation does not do direct political work, but its work in the areas of consumer research, public policy, public education, and leadership development complement the advocacy work done by NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts.

The Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization founded in 1979. Gifts to the Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts PAC helps elect pro-choice champions into state and local offices by providing financial and in-kind campaign contributions to candidates it has endorsed.

The NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts PAC was founded in 1981. Donations to any Political Action Committee are not tax-deductible.
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Supporters walk over to the State House to meet with their legislators about the ROE Act. (Image: Sarah Chin)