



Removing barriers to contraception [Letter]

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A report released recently by the Guttmacher Institute shows a sharp decline in national abortion rates and strongly suggests it is due to increased access to birth control and fact-based sexual health information. We celebrate this news.

Right now we have a unique opportunity for women and families in Maryland. Planned Parenthood of Maryland has announced an expansion of our long-acting contraception services project. Long-acting reversible contraception is a method of birth control that is either implanted in the arm, such as the Implanon, or intrauterine devices such as Paragard or Mirena.

These methods have an effectiveness rate of more than 99 percent, with some lasting up to 10 years. A copper IUD also functions as emergency contraception, or EC, for women for whom Plan B is not an effective method.

Yet these methods are often cost prohibitive for many women who want a long-acting form of contraception — some devices are priced up to \$1,000. In addition, a lack of general understanding about LARCs prevents women from knowing which method to choose.

With support from the Abell Foundation we have been able to offer LARCs as a same-day procedure at no cost for women in Baltimore City. Our talented staff has received extensive training on how to counsel patients and explain the benefits of LARCs. And our educators have been in the field, sharing information about the most effective methods available.

We are committed to educating women on all of their birth control options and to alleviating factors that may prevent them from effectively planning for their family. In the first year of the LARC access project, we saw a dramatic increase of women requesting these methods of contraception. The momentum gained from this spike propels us forward to continue expansion.

Through our new partnership with the **Maryland Community Health Resources Commission**, Planned Parenthood will expand the project to our health centers in Salisbury, Towson, Owings Mills and Annapolis this March. Taken together, these programs will serve hundreds of women across Maryland.

Planned Parenthood is proud to provide every FDA-approved birth control method at low or no cost. We also provide reproductive health education and services to more than 50,000 Marylanders each year in local communities, churches, schools and health centers.

We know what works: Removing barriers to the most effective contraception methods and providing accurate reproductive health information means better family planning, a lower rate of infant deaths and fewer unintended pregnancies. We are proud to serve our communities in this way and to help remove the barriers to the most modern, effective birth methods at reduced or no cost.

Jenny Black, Baltimore

The writer is CEO of Planned Parenthood of Maryland.

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