

# Nurses on the Frontline: Navigating and Advocating in the Legislative Arena



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**NURSES ARE ON THE FRONT LINES** of healthcare, witnessing firsthand the challenges and needs of patients, the healthcare system, and the effects of the nursing shortage crisis. Nurses' involvement in legislation is crucial for several reasons:

- 1. Advocacy for Patient Care:** Nurses deeply understand patient needs and can advocate for policies that improve patient outcomes. By engaging in legislative processes, they can push for reforms that ensure better access to care, patient safety, and quality of services.
- 2. Improving Working Conditions:** Nurses frequently encounter difficult working conditions, including long hours, caring for patients with higher acuity, and often inadequate resources. Additionally, incidents of violence against nurses are on the rise, prompting many to leave the profession. Legislative involvement enables nurses to advocate for improved working conditions, which in turn enhances job satisfaction and helps retain professionals in the field.
- 3. Public Health Initiatives:** Nurses play a crucial role in public health. Their involvement in legislation can help shape policies that tackle important health issues, such as health promotion programs, disease prevention, and health education. Nurse involvement helps to ensure that public health initiatives are both practical and effective.
- 4. Professional Development and Recognition:** Engaging in legislation helps elevate the nursing profession by highlighting the expertise and contributions of nurses. It provides opportunities for professional development and leadership, fostering a sense of empowerment and recognition within the healthcare community.

- 5. Influencing Healthcare Policy:** Nurses bring a unique perspective to healthcare policy discussions. Their clinical experience and patient-centered approach can influence the development of policies that are more aligned with the realities of healthcare delivery. This can lead to more effective and sustainable healthcare systems.
- 6. Addressing the Nursing Shortage:** The nursing shortage is a significant issue that impacts the quality of care and the efficiency of healthcare systems. By engaging in legislation, nurses can advocate for policies that tackle the root causes of this shortage. This includes securing funding for nursing education, recruiting nursing faculty, providing incentives to enter the profession, implementing measures to retain experienced nurses, and understanding why new nurses leave the bedside within two years of practice. Legislative efforts can help ensure a stable and adequate nursing workforce to meet the increasing demands of healthcare.
- 7. Influencing Healthcare Policy:** Nurses offer a unique and valuable perspective in healthcare policy discussions. Their clinical experience and focus on patient care can help shape policies that reflect the realities of healthcare delivery. By meeting with legislators, sharing personal stories, and expressing our concerns, nurses can contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable healthcare systems.

Nurses play a vital role in the healthcare system by providing essential care and support to patients. Their influence, however, goes beyond the bedside. By engaging in legislation, nurses can advocate for policies that improve patient care,

enhance working conditions, increase access to quality nursing programs, recruit nursing faculty, tackle the nursing shortage, and address public health issues. Through their involvement in the legislative process, nurses can utilize their unique insights and experiences to shape healthcare policies that reflect the realities of clinical practice.

The Iowa Nurses Association (INA) is here to assist with navigating the legislative landscape. On Wednesday, March 5, 2025, the INA will host **Legislative Day**, an event designed for all nurses and nursing students to engage in legislation. The morning sessions will feature speakers who will provide updates on current legislation, along with a poster session that highlights nursing research and practice. In the afternoon, nurses will take their voices to the Capitol to meet with legislators and share their experiences. This is a crucial opportunity for lawmakers to understand how policies affect patient care and the nursing profession. These interactions are vital to ensuring that healthcare policies accurately reflect the realities of nursing practice and address the needs of both nurses and patients.

Stay informed through the [INA advocacy webpage](#), where you can find information about our legislative priorities, utilize the legislative toolbox, track bills, and access complimentary quarterly Town Halls, among other resources! ■

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