President's Message

Advocacy is Caring Out Loud

Dawn Bowker, PhD, ARNP-BC, CNE, President, Iowa Nurses Association

As we step into a new year of progress and purpose for the Iowa Nurses Association, I am inspired by the energy, dedication, and vision that continue to shape our professional community. January has already brought important moments of renewal welcoming newly elected leaders, strengthening our organizational infrastructure, and engaging together in powerful advocacy efforts. These milestones reflect not only where we are today, but the collective strength, resilience, and commitment that will guide us through the year ahead. As we embrace this momentum, I am reminded that advocacy is caring out loud, and it is through this shared voice that we elevate our profession and our impact. It is an honor to share these updates with you and to walk alongside each of you as we advance nursing across Iowa with a new and refreshed vision.

In January, the Iowa Nurses Association held elections for leadership positions, and I want to extend heartfelt congratulations to our newly elected leaders. Your willingness to step forward reflects a commitment to advancing our profession, strengthening our association, and amplifying the collective voice of nurses across Iowa. Leadership in nursing is both a responsibility and a calling, and I am grateful for the dedication, courage, and vision each of you brings to this work. Our future is brighter because of your readiness to serve.

This January also marked an important milestone for INA as our Board of Directors announced a new strategic partnership with Synergy Healthcare Solutions, which will serve as Executive Director and provide association management services. This collaboration enhances INA's operational capacity and supports our mission to serve members, advocate for the nursing profession, and advance healthcare excellence across Iowa. It represents an investment in strong infrastructure and high-quality leadership that will help INA continue thriving in a rapidly changing healthcare landscape. I look forward to working with Synergy Healthcare Solutions and Greg Opseth as INA's Executive Director as we pave a fresh direction

for INA. I am excited to share we will be introducing a podcast, Beyond the Bedside. The Beyond the Bedside podcasts will be conversational, diverse, and relevant with the first podcast airing March 16. The podcast will be recorded every six weeks and available for you to access at your convenience.

Legislative Day this year was a tremendous success. Nearly 100 Iowa nurses came together for a powerful morning of learning and connection before heading to the Capitol to meet with legislators and share INA's legislative priorities. The conversations held were meaningful and demonstrated once again the impact nurses have when we speak with one clear, united voice. Participants engaged deeply with the legislative process, explored issues affecting nursing practice and patient care, and strengthened vital relationships with policymakers. The energy of the day confirmed that advocacy is not only necessary but transformative for individuals, for our profession, and for the people we serve.

I am especially grateful to the nursing programs that brought students to participate. Your commitment to teaching policy as part of nursing practice is invaluable. To our mid- and late-career nurses who joined us, thank you for your leadership and mentorship; you model what sustained advocacy looks like. And if this was your first Legislative Day, thank you for stepping outside your comfort zone to expand your professional experience. Choosing to engage in policy is choosing to shape the future, and that choice matters. The success of this year's event is a testament to the outstanding collaboration between the INA Education Committee and the Public Policy Committee, whose joint efforts created an inspiring and impactful experience for all.

As the legislative session continues, I encourage every member to follow the bills aligned with INA's legislative priorities. The Bills can be located at: **https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/ina**

Remember, your voice is essential. When nurses stay engaged, policies shift—sometimes slowly, sometimes boldly, but always meaningfully. Advocacy is not a one-time event; it is an ongoing expression of our professional integrity and our unwavering commitment to improving the health of our communities.

Looking ahead, I invite you to mark your calendar for our Fall Conference this October 27 - 28 at the Gateway Hotel in Ames. This annual gathering is an opportunity to connect, learn, recharge, and reaffirm the powerful work we do together.

As we move forward into the year, remember that advocacy is caring out loud. Every conversation, every email, every moment you choose to speak up, these are acts of courage and compassion. You are shaping not only the profession of nursing but the health and well-being of Iowa. Together, we are building a stronger, more unified future for the nurses and patients of our state. ■

A Message from the Executive Director

Greg Opseth, Executive Director, Iowa Nurses Association

I am truly humbled to serve as the Executive Director of the Iowa Nurses Association. INA represents the strength, expertise, and dedication of nurses across Iowa, and it is an honor to work on behalf of this community.

As I step into this role, my focus is on supporting the association's mission and ensuring that INA continues to be a strong, responsive resource for nurses. Nursing is evolving rapidly, and professional organizations play a critical role in providing advocacy, education, leadership development, and connection. My goal is to help INA continue growing in these areas while staying grounded in the needs and voices of our members.

In the coming months, you will see new opportunities to engage with INA through educational offerings, events, and expanded communication channels—including our upcoming *Beyond the Bedside* podcast. We are committed to creating meaningful ways for nurses to connect, learn, and influence the future of healthcare in Iowa.

The energy and participation at Legislative Day was a powerful reminder of the influence nurses have when they engage in policy and advocacy. INA will continue to provide tools, updates, and opportunities to help members stay informed and involved throughout the legislative session and beyond.

I am excited to work with the Board, committees, volunteers, and members as we move forward together. Your insights, involvement, and leadership are what make INA strong. Thank you for welcoming me into this role and thank you for the work you do every day for patients, communities, and the nursing profession. ■