

# President's Message



Colleagues,  
I want to acknowledge the fatal shooting of ICU nurse Alex Pretti, a colleague whose loss has weighed heavily across the nursing community. His death, under circumstances that have sparked national discussion and mourning, reminds us of the profound risks nurses sometimes face even outside clinical settings and the deep commitment so many bring to caring for others and speaking up for justice.

Spend even a short time with nurses from across our state and one thing becomes clear. Leadership in nursing is not about position, it is about stepping forward, speaking with clarity, and standing firm for our patients and our profession. That leadership was unmistakable during Advocacy Days on February 4 and 5 in Tallahassee. Nurses and nurse practitioners from around Florida came together through the Florida Nurses Association and the Florida Nurse Practitioner Network with a shared goal: making sure policymakers understand both the challenges facing healthcare and the solutions

nurses are ready to lead. Across meetings with legislators and staff, our members addressed access to care, workforce sustainability, patient safety, and the importance of removing outdated barriers that limit nurses from practicing to the full extent of their education and training. What stood out most was not just the number of conversations, but the professionalism, preparation, and unity nurses brought into every room. This was truly nursing leadership in action! These conversations were informed, collaborative, and grounded in real patient experiences and also inseparable from our ethical responsibilities.

Our Code of Ethics is not theoretical, but rather guides how we advocate, how we lead, and how we hold systems accountable to protect the dignity, rights, and safety of those we serve. Advocacy is a direct extension of patient care. When nurses speak up about unsafe conditions, gaps in access, or inequities affecting vulnerable communities, we are living our ethical commitments. During Advocacy Days, we heard members share stories

from rural clinics, urban hospitals, community settings, and long-term care facilities. Those stories gave lawmakers a clearer picture of what policy decisions mean in real lives. I am incredibly proud of every nurse who made the time to be in Tallahassee. Your voices carried the strength and credibility of our profession. You demonstrated that nurses are not only essential caregivers, but also policy leaders, educators, and trusted experts.

I am also thrilled to share wonderful news that reflects the caliber of nursing leadership here in Florida. Barbara Russell, a member of FNA for over 40 years, will be inducted into the Hall of Fame by the American Nurses Association, one of the highest honors in our profession. In addition, Dr. Susan Fowler will receive the ANA Leadership in Ethics Award at the 2026 ANA Membership Assembly in June. These national recognitions highlight what we already know: Florida nurses are shaping practice, policy, and ethical leadership at the highest levels.

As we look ahead, our work continues. Nursing leadership means staying engaged, mentoring those coming behind us, and ensuring our actions reflect the ethical standards that define our profession. Our influence reaches far beyond any single setting. Thank you for the leadership you show every day. Together, we will keep elevating the voice of nursing and advancing policies that support safe, equitable, and high quality care for all Floridians. ■

*With gratitude and determination,  
Marcos Gayol, EdD, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC  
President, Florida Nurses Association*

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