



# Nursing Is a Profession: Together We Rise with Skill, Scholarship, and Professionalism.

**Dear Oklahoma Nurses,**

The debate about whether nursing truly qualifies as a profession has contributed to turbulence. Recent federal proposals from the U.S. Department of Education have sparked widespread discussion by initially excluding or questioning the classification of advanced nursing degrees as “professional degrees,” raising concerns about autonomy, academic preparedness/recognition, and workforce implications. Critics sometimes point to historical hierarchies in healthcare or to ongoing challenges such as staffing, article shortages, and scope-of-practice barriers. Let me be perfectly clear: **nursing is unequivocally a profession.** We meet every established criterion — rigorous academic preparation, state licensure and regulation, a unique body of specialized knowledge, a strong code of ethics, and a commitment to lifelong scholarship and service.

From the bustling emergency departments to the rural clinics of Oklahoma, from school health offices to long-term care facilities, from community outreach programs to academic settings, Oklahoma nurses embody professional excellence. Our education is grounded in science, evidence-based practice, and clinical judgment. We hold associate, baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degrees. We maintain continuing education requirements, pursue specialty certifications, and conduct research that advances patient care. We adhere to the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics and uphold standards that place patient advocacy and safety above all else. These are not the hallmarks of a vocation or a job — they are the foundations of a true profession.

Yet knowing this intellectually is not enough. We must live it boldly in our

daily practice. To every nurse reading this, whether you are a new graduate just beginning your journey, a seasoned bedside clinician, an advanced practice provider, an educator, a researcher, or an executive, **I urge you to continue to rise up** in whatever aspect of nursing you practice. Commit to the highest level of skill, scholarship, and professionalism. Seek out certifications that deepen your expertise. Engage in research and quality improvement initiatives that improve outcomes. Mentor the next generation with intention. Advocate relentlessly for full practice authority and the resources you need to deliver the care your patients deserve.

Oklahoma nurses, you are remarkable. You are resilient. You are the heart and the hands of healing in our state.

Oklahoma nurses have always answered the call during pandemics, natural disasters, and everyday moments of crisis. Now is the time to elevate that legacy. Let us reject any narrative that diminishes our contributions. Let’s demonstrate through our actions that nursing is not merely supportive care but a cornerstone of the entire healthcare system: autonomous, evidence-driven, and indispensable.

Remember this powerful truth: **nursing is the largest healthcare profession in the United States and here in Oklahoma.** With more than 5 million registered nurses nationwide and tens of thousands across our state, we possess tremendous collective power. When we unite, when we speak with one clear, confident voice, our impact multiplies exponentially. To-

gether, we shape healthcare policy at the state capitol and in Washington. Together, we drive innovations in patient safety, health equity, and community wellness. Together, we transform lives in ways no other discipline can match.

Imagine what is possible when every Oklahoma nurse practices at the pinnacle of our profession. When we collaborate across settings and specialties. When we support one another’s growth and well-being. When we stand united in advocacy for safe staffing, fair compensation, and the removal of barriers that limit our ability to serve. The future of healthcare in our state and the health of our communities depend on the strength of our unified voice.

Oklahoma nurses, you are remarkable. You are resilient. You are the heart and the hands of healing in our state. Stand tall in your expertise. Advocate boldly for your patients and your profession. Lead with confidence and compassion. The world needs what only nurses can provide — skilled, scholarly, professional care delivered with unwavering dedication.

Now is our moment. Let us rise together, practice at the highest level, and show Oklahoma and the nation the full power of our profession. ■

*With pride and deep appreciation for each of you,*  
**Cassy Abbott Eng, Ph.D., RN, LNC, FAAN**  
**President, Oklahoma Nurses Association**