

Building the Future of Nursing Together

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When we honor leaders who have served before us, I am reminded that nursing is always about something larger than any one individual. We inherit a legacy, we build upon it, and we leave it stronger for those who come next.

After 28 years as a nurse, I can honestly say that I have never been more optimistic about the future of nursing in Oklahoma...

After all these years, I still get excited about nursing.

Not because it's easy.

Not because we've solved every challenge.

But because I've seen what happens when nurses come together with a common purpose.

I've seen nurses save lives.

I've seen nurses change systems.

I've seen nurses transform communities.

And I've seen nurses accomplish things that others thought were impossible.

That is why I am so excited about the future.

Because I believe we are standing at a pivotal moment for nursing in Oklahoma.

When we gather again in 2027, I want us to be able to look back and say that this was the year we decided not simply to react to healthcare's challenges, but to shape healthcare's future.

I want 2027 to be remembered as the year Oklahoma nurses expanded their influence.

The year more nurses found their voice in advocacy.

The year more nurses stepped into leadership.

The year we strengthened our workforce by investing in the next generation.

The year we elevated the image and value of professional nursing throughout our state.

The year we built stronger connections between nursing education, practice, policy, and community health.

And most importantly, the year we demonstrated that nursing is not just part of the solution to Oklahoma's healthcare challenges.

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

Nursing is leading the solution.

By 2027, I want every nursing student entering our profession to see a future filled with opportunity.

I want every experienced nurse to know their wisdom is valued.

I want more nurses serving on boards, leading organizations, influencing legislation, and helping make decisions that affect the health of Oklahomans.

I want Oklahoma to be recognized as a place where nurses are developed, supported, respected, and empowered to practice at the highest level of their education and expertise.

That future does not belong to one president.

- It belongs to all of us.
- The bedside nurse.
- The educator.
- The advanced practice nurse.
- The nurse researcher.
- The public health nurse.
- The executive leader.
- The nursing student sitting in this room wondering how they can make a difference.

The answer is simple.

You already are.

What makes me optimistic about the future is that I know the people who will create it.

They're sitting right here.

When I look across this room, I see talent, innovation, compassion, and leadership.

I see people who care deeply about one another and deeply about the communities we serve.

I see the future of healthcare in Oklahoma.

Twenty-eight years ago, I became a nurse because I wanted to make a difference in people's lives.

Today, I have the privilege of standing before a room full of people who do exactly that every day.

And after 28 years, I am more convinced than ever that there is no greater profession.

So let's be bold.

In the words of Ted Lasso, let's be curious.

Let's mentor generously.

Let's advocate courageously.

Let's lead confidently.

And let's work together to ensure that by 2027, nursing's voice, influence, and impact across Oklahoma have never been stronger.

Because the future of nursing in Oklahoma isn't something we're waiting for.

It's something we're building.

Together.

Thank you for the honor of serving alongside you, and I cannot wait to see what we accomplish in the year ahead. ■