

## **2019 Nurse in Washington Internship Report**

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The Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI), sponsored by the Nurse Organization Alliance (NOA), is a program designed to empower nursing professionals that are interested in learning more about the legislative process. The objectives focused on how nurses can be involved and influence policy at the local and national level, how nurses can work effectively with legislative staff to advocate policy agendas, and how nurses can identify techniques to advance legislative issues in regard to nursing practice.

The learning environment was welcoming, organized and the objectives were presented in a manner that immediately allowed us to sit back and learn. The room was filled with nursing advocates from across the country. Professional Nursing Organizations such as Hospice and Palliative Care, Dermatology, Nephrology, ASPAN, Oncology, Neurology, Neonatal/Pediatrics, the International Nurses Society on Addiction and the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses, (to name a few), were passionately engaged.

It was overwhelming to hear the stories about the struggles our profession encounters on a daily basis. The consensus was the same, our patients are at risk if health policy and processes are not addressed. NOA understands that in order to care for our patients, our colleagues and ourselves, nurses must be heard, hence the reason they graciously support NIWI.

The Professional Advocate Panel and the Advocacy Sessions afforded us with the materials we needed to be heard! They focused on how nurses can advocate for Congressional support to improve health and health care, the reauthorization of Title VIII which supports nurse workforce development and that nurses are a vital voice for better American health and health care. They taught us to express to our governmental leaders that nurses are critical to effective strategies addressing the opioid crisis.

The most amazing part of NIWI was heading to Capital Hill to meet with our Congressmen and Senators. We were ready, we knew what to say, how to say it and how leave a lasting impression on how committed we are! Meetings were scheduled to speak with legislative assistants from Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Edward Markey from Massachusetts. The meetings went well, though brief, I felt like I was heard. I expressed my gratitude that Senator Warren and Markey co-sponsored Title VIII, and I appreciated their veneration towards the nursing profession, yet I wanted them to know, as a constituent of MA, I'm counting on them to continue to support Title VIII. I offered my services at the local level to spread the word on my Congressional requests, and have already heard back from Congressman Seth Moulton's office to set up a meeting in MA.

As a member of ASPAN and a liaison on the Governmental Affairs Strategic Work Team, I am extremely grateful to have been granted the NIWI scholarship.