

Capitol Engagement: A Nursing Advocacy Model for Regional Chapters

Andrew Thum, DNP, ML, RN, NEA-BC, Jessica Lazzeri, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE, Elizabeth Menschner, DNP, MAS, MSN, RN, NEA-BC

Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders (PONL)

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders (PONL) is advancing a comprehensive advocacy strategy designed to strengthen nursing leadership, support workforce wellbeing, and influence healthcare policy across the Commonwealth. As healthcare complexity increases, nurse leaders must be equipped with the skills and structures needed to engage effectively in legislative environments.

To showcase PONL's evidence-informed advocacy model and demonstrate how structured engagement, partnerships, and education empower nurse leaders to influence policy and improve patient outcomes.

BACKGROUND

- Nurse leaders bring critical frontline insight to policymaking.
- Legislative advocacy is increasingly essential in addressing workforce shortages, care delivery challenges, and health equity.
- Engagement through AONL and the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) Advocacy Days provides direct access to state and federal lawmakers.
- Partnerships between PONL, health systems, and professional organizations strengthen alignment on statewide priorities.

METHODS AND ADVOCACY MODEL

1. Strategic Engagement 🏛️

- Participation in AONL & HAP Advocacy Days (Harrisburg & Washington, D.C.)
- Direct dialogue with legislators on workforce sustainability, safety, and equitable care

2. Partnership Alignment 🤝

- Collaboration with HAP and regional partner organizations to unify nursing and health system priorities
- Joint initiatives addressing workforce shortages, care models, and health equity

3. Education & Messaging 📢

- Policy education for nurse leaders
- Storytelling campaigns to illustrate the value of nursing leadership
- Relationship building with policymakers and stakeholders

4. Evidence-Informed Approach 📊

- Ongoing review of research and policy trends
- Insights from recent literature (e.g., Han, Kim, & Malak, 2024) highlight barriers/facilitators to nurses' political engagement
- Foundational models (e.g., O'Neil, 1996) reinforce the necessity of nursing involvement in reform efforts

IMPACT

- ✓ Stronger alignment between nursing priorities and broader healthcare goals
- ✓ Expansion of structured opportunities for nurse leaders to influence policy
- ✓ Increased visibility in legislative spaces
- ✓ 27 PA Nurse Leaders at AONL Advocacy Day 2025



LESSONS LEARNED

- Policymaker engagement is most effective when nurse leaders translate clinical realities into policy language.
- Cross-sector collaboration strengthens credibility and impact.
- Leadership development is essential to sustaining advocacy capacity.
- In person visits to local, state, and/or federal offices are most effective.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Invest in policy education and leadership development for nurse leaders.
- Use regional collaboration to scale influence and address workforce issues.
- Adopt evidence informed approaches to strategic advocacy planning.
- Integrate legislative engagement as a core leadership competency.

ADAPTABILITY TO OTHER SETTINGS

This advocacy model can be replicated by nursing leadership organizations nationwide. Critical components include:

- Strategic partnerships
- Structured advocacy events
- Evidence-based policy messaging
- Workforce-centered leadership development

CONCLUSIONS

PONL's advocacy framework elevates nursing leadership, enhances workforce wellbeing, and amplifies the nursing voice in state and federal policy arenas.

By aligning partnerships, education, and evidence, this model provides a scalable roadmap for advancing nurse and patient advocacy across diverse healthcare settings.

REFERENCES

- Han, N. K., Kim, G. S., & Malak, M. (2024). *The barriers and facilitators influencing nurses' political participation or healthcare policy intervention: A systematic review and qualitative meta-synthesis*. Journal of Nursing Management.
- O'Neil, E. H. (1996). *Nursing's agenda for health care reform*. Nursing Outlook, 44(1),6-11.

RESOURCES AND CONTACT

Andrew Thum, andrew.thum@jefferson.edu

