

AAACN Working for You

Nurses Meet with Representatives to Discuss Nursing and Healthcare Bills for Advocacy Day 2024

Emily Gallagher

What are you passionate about in nursing? The American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) promotes advocacy in nursing and offers tools on how to get involved in advocating for meaningful change on issues important to your practice. The AAACN Advocacy Committee encourages AAACN members to become familiar with current legislative issues and how they may affect you. Resources for getting started are available on the AAACN website at www.aaacn.org/about/advocacy-initiatives. AAACN members recently used many of these resources to participate in advocacy at the Arizona State Capitol.

The Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix stands as a symbol of democracy, where lawmakers gather to debate, create, and enact laws that shape the lives of millions. Stepping into its halls is like entering a vault of history and governance. In February 2024, nurses from several valley healthcare organizations, including Mayo Clinic, Banner, and Honorhealth, embarked on a journey to witness the heartbeat of democracy as legislation unfolded in Phoenix.

The day began early as the sun cast its golden hues over the desert landscape. The anticipation was palpable as citizens, lobbyists, and lawmakers alike gathered at the Capitol. From seasoned politicians to passionate activists, each played a role in the intricate dance of governance. We found our way into one of the many rooms where visitors may view the proceedings of the legislature. Here, proposed bills are scrutinized and debated before they advance further. Citizens can voice their opinions and testify for or against legislation.

Next, we met with our respective representatives to share our thoughts on three separate bills for nursing and healthcare. The first bill required schools to address the credentials of employees working as school nurses (not every person is a nurse). The next bill was to expedite licensure for out-of-state nurses coming to Arizona to help with the nursing shortage. The final bill was to ensure patients on Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS, the state's Medicaid agency) had access to preventative dental services.

Our representative was eager to speak with each of us and hear our thoughts on the upcoming bills. She encouraged us to reach out in the future to discuss nursing and healthcare topics that we are passionate about, using our experience on the front lines to educate her.



AAACN member Emily Gallagher and other nurses visited the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix and met with Representative Laura Terech to discuss legislation impacting nurses.

As we neared the end of the day, we were escorted on a tour of the building. Our guide shared secrets of stories that unfolded behind the marble and mahogany backdrops during the Wild West days. The experience reminded us that we have a voice and must use it to ensure the future of nursing remains protected.

Get Involved!

For those interested in sharing their passion for nursing and legislation, there are ways to get involved. Join a professional organization engaged in legislative advocacy efforts such as the American Nurses Association, your state nurses association, or AAACN. Find your local, state, and federal representatives based on where you live at www.usa.gov/elected-officials. The website includes contact information for each legislator so constituents can contact them to discuss topics for future bills or concerns. You also can write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, explaining why an item on an upcoming ballot matters to health and urging citizens to vote. ●

Emily Gallagher, DNP, MSN, RN, is an Ambulatory Nurse, Mayo Clinic, Scottsdale, AZ. She may be contacted at gallagher.emily@mayo.edu.



Access advocacy and legislative resources on the AAACN website.