

OSF HealthCare nurses advocate at the Illinois State Capitol

Nurses selected from across the OSF Ministry advocate for advancing patient care beyond the bedside

OSF HealthCare was recognized at the Illinois State Capitol on March 26 as part of advocacy efforts by OSF nurses.

The visit was coordinated through the OSF government relations department as part of ongoing advocacy efforts. The nurses and OSF HealthCare were formally recognized by Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth in the Illinois House and Senator David Koehler in the Senate Chamber. The recognition reinforces the commitment of OSF HealthCare to its nurses and the profession and highlights the vital role nurses play in healthcare.

22 nurses selected by chief nursing officers from hospitals across the OSF Ministry made the trip to Springfield where they listened to speakers to learn about the finer points of advocacy and what was happening in the Capitol.

The group then spent the rest of the day meeting with lawmakers and advocating on behalf of OSF including protections of the 340B drug discount program, inclusion into the national nurse licensure compact, efforts to protect the safety net status of two OSF hospitals, and the creation of an OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois license plate.

"Engaging nurses in advocacy efforts is one of the most powerful ways to advance patient care beyond the bedside. Nurses bring a unique and trusted voice that is grounded in real patient experiences, safety concerns, and the day-to-day realities of caring for individuals and their families," explained Melinda Cooling, DNP, Chief Nursing and Advanced Practice Executive for OSF HealthCare who accompanied the group.

"When our nurses have the opportunity to engage directly with legislators, they help to shape policies that impact access, quality, workforce strategies, and health equity. We want legislative decisions to not just made on data, but by pairing that with real life clinical experience. Taking our nurses to the Capitol also helps strengthen professional ownership and leadership, empowering them to see advocacy as an extension of their role. Their advocacy efforts help to protect patients, influence systems, and improve the future of healthcare," Cooling added.

The day highlighted the vital role nurses play as advocates for the nursing profession and patient safety, reinforcing that no one is better positioned to speak to these issues than nurses themselves. The experience also demonstrated to participating nurses that legislators are deeply interested in health care issues and value hearing directly from frontline caregivers.