**IONL Board Report – 2021 Annual Legislative Committee Report**

**2021 Indiana Legislative Session**

This year was a challenge for the Indiana session given the impact of the pandemic. There was little opportunity to provide testimony in session as much moved to a virtual format. We were not able to have an IONL advocacy day this year but will hopefully be back for 2022. This was an unprecedented session and did not technically adjourn but remains currently “in recess” until called back to address redistricting and other issues deemed important by the leadership.

There were several pieces of legislation that were **avoided** that may have had adverse impact on healthcare organizations:

* Immunization requirement prohibition​
* Physician non-compete restrictions​
* Attorney General merger oversight​
* Hospital contract limitations​
* Site of service

Several new pieces of legislation were signed into law that impact healthcare organizations:

* Multiple aspects of the State Biennial Budget (HEA 1001)
* Telehealth (SEA 3)
* State Health Improvement Plan (HB 1007)
* Hospital and Nursing Home Visitation (SB 202)

**Partnership with IHA**

This year the IHA has had several staff changes and the multiple waves of Covid have made it difficult to secure a regular meeting cadence to strategically plan for proactive advocacy. During the remaining months of 2021 the committee will refresh efforts to establish a regular cadence to plan for the advocacy agenda for 2022. We have been partnering with IHA and the Patient Safety Coalition on the following topics:

* White-Bagging and Brown Bagging of pharmaceuticals
* Hospital visitor restrictions
* Hospital diversion status and reporting
* Feedback on the OSHA guidelines for Covid-19

**AONL Advocacy Day**

IONL and Indiana had a great participation in the AONL advocacy day which occurred on May 26-27, 2021. A record number of participants from the state attended. Participants had meetings with their Senate and House Representative from their home district to advocate for AONLs policy objectives including:

* Strengthening the Nursing Workforce
* Investment in Nursing Education Infrastructure
* Support Clinician Resiliency and Mental Health
* Expand Telehealth to Increase Access

A specific piece of legislation which was advocated for by participants was the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (S.610) with was co-sponsored by Todd Young of Indiana. This important piece of legislation seeks to establish grants and training for health care professionals and learners to support mental health, reduce substance use disorders, and prevent burnout. In a legislative win, this bill passed **unanimously** in the Senate and is now with the House.

**Indiana Coalition for Patient Centered Care**

IONL has supported the work that began in the first quarter with CAPNI in response to the ISMA position statement on physicians as leaders on the healthcare team. This movement has grown and has expanded and picked up endorsement from several professional organizations representing various interprofessional healthcare roles as well as the ICN and ISNA. Now known as the Indiana Coalition for Patient Centered Care (ICPCC), the group has worked this year to organize and solidify membership, bylaws, and board structure. IONL as a member organization will have a board seat. Elections for officers will take place in December. The group has developed a website and media information to educate the public and advocate for the role nurses at all levels play on the healthcare team.

**Preparation for Legislative Strategic Plan and 2022 Indiana Legislative Session.**

In the final months of 2021, the committee will come together to complete a strategic plan around Priority #4 and prepare for the 2022 Indiana Legislative Session as well as to continue attempts to partner with new staff at the IHA.

Possible Topics that will be focus for the 2022 Legislative session:

* In general, this will be a short session (lasting January through March) and will not be a budget year. Legislation tied to budget will not be likely to be addresses (e.g. cigarette tax).
* Compact licensure: Indiana is already a compact state for RNs, but the assembly will likely focus on expansion to MDs and other roles to reduce barriers for entry to practice in the state in 2022.
* Vaccines: While there were some This was a tenuous issue in the last session, and it is possible that the state may try to black federal attempts on vaccine mandates.
* Health equity: likely will be proposals for mandatory cultural competence training for healthcare workers.
* Roles of the Governor’s office and the General Assembly during health emergencies: During the last session, there was a bill introduced limiting the Governor’s powers during a health emergency and changing the IN constitution that during a health emergency, the General Assembly could call themselves back into session rather than the Governor calling them back into session. This was vetoed by the Governor, and subsequently overruled. There is litigation pending on this piece of legislation which may escalate to the IN Supreme Court. It is expected that there will be more focus on this topic during the 2022 session.
* We will remain vigilant in watching for legislation that was proposed last session impacting nurses and nursing practice that did not move forward (e.g. “veterinary nurse” legislation).

Respectfully submitted,

Jason H Gilbert PhD MBA RN

IONL Legislative Chair