We are nearly halfway through 2022 and continuing to support emergency nurses in so many ways. Springtime for the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) means our annual day on the hill. This day, and general time of year, means that we are able to go to Washington, DC, to advocate for issues that are relevant to our work and to the patients for whom we care. I sincerely look forward to this opportunity to share ENA’s priorities with as many legislators as possible.

If you think about Washington, DC, in spring, you likely can imagine cherry blossoms, the monuments, and the National Mall. Admittedly, on my first-ever visit to our nation’s capital, I was surprised to hear that the mall did not have any stores! Turns out, the name for the National Mall is derived from a history of lawn games and grand avenue parks that preceded The Mall in London and consists of a host of incredible museums. There are so many opportunities to take in the history of the United States and to learn about those who have helped to guide and lead our country.

Each year, ENA takes our state and chapter leaders and government affairs chairs to Capitol Hill to support legislation that is relevant to our profession. We have 2 dedicated government-relations experts, Richard Mereu and Rob Kramer, who focus solely on emergency nurses and issues that need attention. These 2 experts led efforts related to the Dr Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act.1 This bill was passed in the House of Representatives in 2021, passed by the Senate on February 17, 2022, and signed into law by the President on March 18, 2022.

This law is key to the health and well-being of our care team members. Throughout the year, we have highlighted how emergency nurses should recharge and focus on taking care of themselves to take care of others. The Dr Lorna Breen Act helps to support this effort by having the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) support grants that train health care providers on suicide prevention, other behavioral health issues, and strategies to improve well-being. In addition, DHHS would be asked to establish or expand programs to promote mental and behavioral health among health care providers involved with COVID-19 response efforts. The law recognizes the impact on our care team members and asks for specific efforts to help in ensuring their health. COVID-19 has changed the way we look at health care and the work environments our staff experience.

The second part of the law states that the DHHS will study and develop policy recommendations on preventing burnout and improving mental and behavioral health among health care providers, removing barriers to accessing care and treatment, and identifying strategies to promote resiliency. The passing of this law was key to the acknowledgment of the challenges and marks positive progress in addressing the struggles care team members have seen. ENA was there every step of the way and will continue to be as we find ways to recover, redesign and recharge our nurses.

This action and advocacy is only one of the ways in which ENA supports our members in recharging and engaging in their profession. For many, supporting legislation that improves their work environment is rewarding, and I encourage all ENA members to continue to use their voice and advocate for improvement.

Author Disclosures

Conflicts of interest: none to report.

REFERENCE

1. Dr Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act, 42 USC 117 (2022).