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The Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) experience was definitely very educational and enlightening for me from a healthcare standpoint. Registered nurses and nurse practitioners serve as strong advocates for our patients when it comes to influencing the legislative process and policymaking. This nursing focused internship reinforced the fact that federal legislators view nurses as being very trustworthy, tenacious, reliable, and understanding the “big picture” of today’s healthcare issues. My participation in NIWI also made me more aware of the direct impact that federal healthcare policymaking has on specific patient populations. I was able to meet face to face with senators, congressmen, and their legislative staff to discuss first-hand the difficulties and frustrations patients, and providers alike, are experiencing in the world of healthcare.

The NIWI experience also allowed for networking with other nurses across the nation and created a forum of education and collaboration. I met nurses from various specialties and backgrounds, but there was one common theme among us all: our patient population. We, as nurses, desire what is best for our patients and serve as an advocate for them in this complex world of healthcare. Nurses and patients are finding the navigation of today’s healthcare system to be extremely challenging, baffling, and disheartening at times. The NIWI experience stressed the importance of engaging lawmakers and their legislative staff, so they are well aware of these challenges along with specific recommendations for improvement.

As a nurse practitioner, and an assistant professor of nursing in academia, attending NIWI in Washington was a very valuable experience for me personally and professionally. I am looking forward to utilizing the knowledge I gained from this internship to further enhance my influence on health care legislation on a state and federal level, and to serve as a strong advocate

for my patients who reside in the most rural parts of my state. I will also encourage my nursing colleagues, nursing students, and the public, in general, to communicate their healthcare concerns to their local, state, and federal lawmakers. The lawmakers want to hear directly from their constituents. Direct input and expertise from nurses provides lawmakers, and their legislative staff, with the necessary knowledge needed to create healthcare policy that will have a positive impact on society as a whole, which is extremely important during this time of healthcare reform in the United States.