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Board of Directors, as they contemplate the business of the organization in the areas of governance, finance, testing, IT, nursing regulation, and research, ask themselves, "Are we fit for the future? Are we prepared to what the future holds? Are we doing the right things for the right reason? Are we spending our resources wisely? Are we providing value to the membership? Are our actions aligned to the vision, mission, and values and to the results we desire? Are we making a difference?"

In terms of board governance, one of the activities that the Board undertakes is an assessment of the Board as a corporate body, and on alternate years, which occurred this year, NCSBN conducted a review of individual Board of Directors' performance. This process offers an opportunity to look at individual board member contributions in more detail and allows members to discuss strategies for overall Board of Director development, including member orientation and ongoing board education activities.

Many of the tools available for such an assessment are designed for nonprofit organizations that work in very different spaces than we do. This year, recognizing the unique nature of our business, we revised the assessment tool for it to be more aligned with this organization's structure and responsibilities. The process for board member performance assessment involved the completion by each director of a self-assessment survey instrument that consisted of questions focused on board member competencies, and each member also completed a survey related to each of their colleagues.

The consultant then met individually with each director to discuss their individual results and report, and the overall survey findings were presented to the Board of Directors and the CEO in a closed session to determine strategies going forward. The level of trust, risk-taking, and willingness to have crucial conversations throughout this process was impressive.

I share this with you as an example of the lengths to which we go to ensure sound governance and to ensure that we, as your Board of Directors is performing at the highest possible level to discharge our duties for the good of NCSBN. You will note in the Board of Directors report that to continue to look up and out, the board has been engaged with strategic partnerships, attending external meetings, and undertaking intentional joint work that ensures that regulation is at the table on a national level and that we collaborate on areas of mutual concern, ever mindful of our mission and strategic plan.

And you see here on the screen just some of the organizations that reflect also some of the meetings that we've attended over the years in our joint work. In addition to the highlights of business activities such as the strategic plan, creating a compact nation, and Next Generation NCLEX, NCSBN has been engaged with our regulatory colleagues from other disciplines and professional associations.

Three areas of mutual concern that impact regulation and led to engagement with our strategic partners are mental health, the opioid crisis, and workforce. And I just took a sample of some of the issues to discuss. The pandemic has taken a significant toll on nurses worldwide.

Sickness, burnout, intention to leave or move away from acute care and retirement are climbing, as are reports of abuse and violence against nurses. The stress on the profession has left an unprepared workforce, and nurses have faced care situations more challenging than they have ever been exposed to.

Preparations were not in place to support and educate related to the patient population nurses have to serve, and the profession has long overlooked self-care. From a nurse regulatory standpoint, a close examination of reports to boards related to safety to practice is necessary to ensure a balance between public protection and retention of a professional.

Alternative programs are playing an important role in regulatory boards are under greatest scrutiny to ensure that the license processes and the decisions provide adequate protection for nurses with conditions that may need to be accommodated. Prevention, self-care, resilience, and retention are top of mind. Likewise, the opioid crisis is a significant challenge that, along with NCSBN's Regulatory and Professional Association colleagues, we have worked to address.

At a meeting of the Opioid Regulatory Collaborative attended by the Board of Directors, we heard the stark reality of the current crisis, the current opioid crisis. We came together with our regulatory colleagues in medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, physical therapy, and social work to discuss strategies and opportunities for mutual work.

To put this in perspective as to the importance of this work, provisional data from the CDC indicates there were an estimated 107,000 drug overdose deaths in 2021, a 15% increase from 2020. As you know, the approach to the solutions is complex and must be multi-faceted, and we must ask ourselves, "Are we taking actions as regulators that are within our control? What resources are available to educate? What is the state of access to evidence-based treatment for licensees for opioid use disorder and mental health conditions, and the impact of the associated stigma? Have we considered updating policies related to opioid prescribing? Have we examined the effectiveness of required CE for prescribers and non-prescribers? What are the practice and patient safety implications?"

I think we can all agree more than ever, the workforce issues necessitate intentional collaboration between regulation, practice, and education. Through research committees, position statements, strategic objective work groups, and external stakeholder engagement, NCSBN remains focused on the many influences impacting our workforce, scope of practice, innovation, licensure mobility, licensure reform, migration, international recruitment, support workers, federal legislation, data analysis, care delivery, and nursing education redesign are component parts under which consideration is necessary to influence the workforce solutions.

As you participate in forums, this meeting, and focus groups, presentations, and deliberations, I want you to know that the Board of Directors values and considers vital your feedback, involvement, and questions to inform activities and decision-making. If we are to lead public protection and implement strategic action towards quantum change, it will take all of us.

Thank you again to the Board of Directors for taking on this leadership role and for their service, and expert contributions, and perseverance during the past year. Mark Majek and Cathy Borris-Hale, as you complete your terms on the board this week, know that your perspectives, your voices, and your energy will be missed. It has been my honor to serve as the President of Board of Directors of this premier organization this past year and I look forward to what we will accomplish together in the coming year.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to participate in this meeting. Whether you are here in person, in Chicago, or joining us virtually, I hope you benefit from the content, dialogue networking opportunities offered around this year's theme "Leading Public Protection: Strategic Action Towards Quantum Change."

Thank you and let's make it a great week.