President Merlino, Board of Directors, Delegates and members good afternoon. I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide the Executive Director’s report to the House of Delegates.

Before I begin, I’d like to acknowledge the impact the coronavirus is having on our health system, our practice and our lives.

While our healthcare system and supply chain as well as the roles of our members and our colleagues face serious disruption to practice and patient care, I want to acknowledge and commend all of you for the work you are doing on the front lines.

Some of you have been asked to serve in positions outside the surgical suite, while others of you are experiencing a change in schedules including a reduction in hours. All of us are anxious, frustrated, tired, and concerned about the uncertainty that lies before us. We are worrying about our jobs, our facilities, our communities, our families and of course you must be concerned about yourself. How do you maintain the energy and focus to meet all the pressures you are coping with?

In the face of our new reality, stop to think about how strong and resourceful perioperative nurses are.
As tensions rise and exhaustion becomes the norm for those of you on the frontlines of the pandemic, I want to remind you of the remarkable, unique quality of resilience that each and every perioperative nurse has.

You are exceptional critical thinkers, you have the ability to stay strong when faced with poor outcomes in the operating room and, perhaps most important, you have the ability to come back to work day after day and be a member of a team that provides safe care to each and every patient.

I urge you to take time to acknowledge, value, and celebrate the resiliency each of you have within yourself and with your teams. This is the time to tap into your inner strength, practice good health habits by exercising, eating a healthy diet, practicing mindfulness, and sleeping. We know that a lack of sleep impacts our immune system and emotional responses to issues. It is time to continue your commitment to your health and safety as well as that of your patients.

Our decision to cancel Expo impacted our members, suppliers and vendors. It is a conference that always provides an important opportunity to renew relationships, make new connections, gain cutting-edge education and enhance our knowledge of new products on the exhibit floor. Expo gives us a sense of camaraderie; it renews our passion and pride in belonging to AORN and the nursing profession. It provides energy to go back to our facilities with a new-found sense of purpose.

We know you share our disappointment and, as many have communicated to us, you are also concerned about the financial health of the organization in relation to the loss of revenue provided by Expo.

I can assure you AORN remains financially sound due, in large part, to the diversity of our revenue streams and an effective investment strategy. AORN does have cancellation insurance for Expo, however it may take up to two years for the claim to be processed.

In the short term, we are reformulating the strategic plan to meet today’s demands and to leverage today’s technologies. By placing digital process improvement as a priority in our strategic plans over the past several years, we can successfully continue to give you the support you need in clinical practice and in your professional development.

I am pleased to inform you that AORN is resilient.
AORN is identifying new ways to creatively work around the communications barriers this virus has forced upon us. We want our members and vendors to continue their connections in order to showcase product value and support purchasing decisions and patient safety.

For this reason, AORN is launching a Virtual Expo on May 1st to give you the education that’s so important, along with the opportunity to interact with your peers and suppliers. Watch our webpage, social media, emails, and Periop Today for announcements with specific details.

Our board of directors and staff leadership will continue to advance the business of the association by developing and providing new modalities of education and resources for our members – the Virtual Expo is just one example of our potential to create new approaches to support you.

As we have seen in the past, the healthcare community can come together in new ways that only a crisis can generate.

With COVID-19, we know we will never be the same, but together we are finding a new normal and perhaps out of this – in the Year of the Nurse – will come, forgive the paraphrase, the “Greatest Generation of Perioperative Nurses.”

To support your practice and safety, AORN created online COVID-19 resources that are updated daily with new information.

We created a COVID-19 group on ORNurseLink where members are sharing their work-arounds and strategies to manage perioperative safety for providers and patients.

We have also created online FAQs to answer your questions on hygiene, environmental safety, infection prevention and PPE shortages.

We’ve expanded the hours of our consult line to four days a week to give you greater access to our perioperative nursing staff to ask your questions and express your concerns and share your ideas for new solutions. We also hosted a Town Hall Q & A this week that focused on COVID-19 and had over 1,500 attendees. The next Town Hall will be Thursday April 2nd at 6pm MT.
Our work to recruit and retain members can be seen in the high level of engagement in the new Leader category of membership that you heard about yesterday. In addition, our membership team has created new strategies to stay connected to members including the introduction of Member Pulse, this monthly publication reminds members of their benefits and how they can access and easily use them.

In this age of transformation and innovation it is imperative that associations diversify and expand the business of the association to provide additional resources to support the mission and vision of the association.

Our acquisitions over the past few years of Pfiedler Education and Outpatient Surgery Magazine have provided us the opportunity to expand our portfolio of products and services for our members and have been very important to our success.

Outpatient Surgery Magazine hosts The OR Excellence Conference and Reverse Trade Show in the fall. They had their most successful year in 2019 with more than 400 surgical leaders in attendance. In July, Outpatient Surgery Magazine released the results of the annual Readership Study, which identified the publication as the leader in readership among other publications for the 17th year.

Pfiedler Education had a very successful 2019. Pfiedler continues to innovate with a new E-Learning product line and expanding face-to-face seminars. They developed a session for members of the C-suite on the digital hospital. In October they expanded interprofessional education with a seminar for orthopedic surgeons and nurses on the trend in performing total knee replacements in the ambulatory surgery setting.

AORN Syntegrity continues to transform the way facilities standardize perioperative data. It is the only nursing documentation content for your EHR based on PNDS and the AORN Guidelines. Syntegrity is now in use in over 900 hospitals in the US and internationally.

AORN’s vision and our commitment to safe practice give our members and all perioperative nurses the foundation you need to serve as advocates for our patients. As members, you can trust AORN to care for you and your patients...tomorrow and in the future.

To you, our delegates and members, to the board of directors and headquarters staff, thank you for everything you do to keep patients safe and to maintain our association’s position as a leader in the perioperative profession.