

Nomination for the role of Director of Advocacy at ILOTA

Candidate: Pooja A. Patel, DrOT, OTR/L, BCG, CDP, CFPS
poojapatelot.com | papatel308@gmail.com | 732.841.6117

Education & Professional Experience

Since earning my clinical doctorate in occupational therapy, I have spent eight years in acute care practice at Level I trauma hospitals, specializing in geriatrics, dementia, and fall prevention. Beyond my years as a clinical occupational therapist, I've built a career that spans leadership, mentorship, and academia. From the clinic to the classroom—and from state to national platforms—I've contributed to boardrooms, committee meetings, system-wide initiatives, process and quality improvement projects, strategic planning, curriculum development, program design, and student mentorship. These experiences have deepened my understanding of leadership, advocacy, professional development, and mentorship across multiple levels of impact.

In 2023, I started the Aging Together Podcast as a means to educate the public on various topics related to aging, elder care, and caregiving across the US—including policies and regulations that impact it all. In 2024, I received the Public Awareness Award from ILOTA for it. My leadership roles include serving as National President of Pi Theta Epsilon (2019-2022), where I reviewed budgets, ensured 501(c)(3) compliance, and stewarded excess funds responsibly. Since 2021, I have taught graduate and CE courses on older adults, generative AI tools, fall prevention, and mental health. Currently, I am developing a course titled "Leadership, Policy, & Advocacy" for an OT program, requiring me to learn and truly understand federal and state policy trends.

Professional Activities

- **ILOTA** – Member since 2018; Coordinator, Gerontology SIS (present); Mentor, Leadership Development Program (2019-2020, 2023-present)
- **AOTA** – Member since 2014; Website Coordinator, Productive Aging SIS
- **Grass-Roots Advocacy** – Consistently use ILOTA/AOTA action-alert systems to contact legislators during key votes and promote voter turnout among peers.
- **Mentorship & Scholarship** – Frequently present at state and national conferences and mentor OT students and practitioners on advocacy and leadership.

Position Statement

I am honored to have been nominated for the role of **Director of Advocacy**, and I believe every Illinois occupational therapy student and clinician deserves to *understand* how legislation and reimbursement shape daily practice—and to feel confident acting on that knowledge.

Vision

To make policy and reimbursement issues transparent and relatable so practitioners can immediately see the link between a bill in Springfield or Washington and their own paychecks, caseloads, and client outcomes.

My experience translating dense information for families, managing nonprofit finances, and revitalizing professional networks equips me to coordinate ILOTA's Advocacy teams, steward its budget, and keep our membership informed and mobilized.

I would be honored to serve and to advance ILOTA's mission of supporting practitioners and advocating for the people, groups, and populations we serve. Thank you for your consideration.