I felt moved to join the Women’s March in Philadelphia on Jan 21st as a way to express my disapproval about many of Trump’s policies and the impact they will have on women and many others in our communities here in the US and around world. I remember as a teenager, growing up in Chicago, when abortions were illegal. Many women and adolescent girls had to seek abortions at great personal or financial cost, often in unsafe conditions. We protested then, as we do now, to support widely-accessible legalized abortion. There were also those who rose up and created alternative pathways to safe, affordable abortion procedures - heroic actions by everyday people. History tells us that resistance takes many shapes. We will need all of these strategies as we move forward.

Many have pointed out that we should have mobilized earlier, to make sure the destructive forces now running our country were never elected. That would have been good, but we are here now, facing this reality.

At the Women’s March in Philadelphia, I joined in with my group of faculty colleagues, students and their friends and families from the University Of Pennsylvania School Of Nursing. We wore white paper nurse's caps to show our solidarity, as nurses, toward this common cause. (I think it was the first time I have worn a white nursing cap in my 30+ years in this profession.) As nurses, we are on the front lines of health care. We have seen the ravages of diabetes, HIV, cancer and more, on those who could not have come sooner, for preventive health services or regular care, due to lack of resources. We
have been thrilled at the expanding coverage and services provided through the Affordable Care Act - we were beginning to see real improvements in people’s health in the communities where we work as a result of increased access to care. We will not be quiet about the proposed changes to undermine this valuable safety net. We will make our voices heard in our professional organizations, in our local and state governments, in the offices of our federal representatives and we will protest. We will also continue to provide healthcare to those most in need.

I was heartened to see so many others felt moved to join the Women’s March – not only in Philadelphia, but across the US, and around the world as well. The federal policy, enacted this past week, banning conversations about abortion in clinics providing all types of health services receiving some support with US dollars, will have grim consequences globally. It will restrict access to contraception, create more demand for abortions and result in more unintended pregnancies that put mothers and their babies at risk for disability and death. It will reduce access to vaccines and other prevention services that have been making substantive progress in reducing HIV, cancer and other diseases. It is no wonder there was such an overwhelming presence at this Women’s March across the globe. The human suffering resulting from these destructive policies will be substantial.

We will need to gather together, not just for a day, but for a sustained period of time. We will need to think clearly and creatively and take actions of resistance to damaging policies but also actions that will keep people whole in the process, filling in the gaps left by heartless maneuvers by those who would like to see us divided by our differences. I am hopeful that, just maybe, the Women’s March will be the beginning of something new.