Dear Fieldwork Supervisor,

As the President of the American Occupational Therapy Association, I want to thank you for the many hours of service you invest in your tireless mentoring of our profession’s students. The contributions you make to the future of occupational therapy by working with these young men and women who are our future practitioners, educators, researchers and scientists is invaluable. As a leader and role model for our newest practitioners, your help is needed today.

You are perhaps the most powerful professional influence these students have in their lives. They look to you for guidance not only on how to become competent practitioners, but also for what is required to become a committed and contributing member of our professional community. The single most important example you can set for these emerging professionals is to be a member of AOTA. It is a fundamental responsibility as an occupational therapy professional to support the vital work our Association does on our collective behalf. This work is central to occupational therapy’s viability and growth as a profession.

If you are not already a member of AOTA, I ask you to please join us now at www.aota.org/membership or call 800-729-2682. If you are currently a member, please renew when indicated. We need you at this very critical time.

I have been watching with grave concern the impact of our economy's downturn on state budgets, higher education, hospitals, long term care facilities, local school systems, and other organizations that employ occupational therapy practitioners. I want to alert you to how this economic crisis is affecting AOTA. We are feeling the economic impact. While membership remains steady, many of our non-dues revenues that support our critical lobbying, public awareness and evidence-based practice and outcomes initiatives are weakening. The AOTA Board of Directors has worked on these challenging budget issues by carefully cutting our costs. However, the prolonged recession will force us to examine how we can afford to continue this work that is so important to the future of the profession, to your career, and to the futures of the young students you are working with today.

As a new President and Congress take office, it is essential that we not only remain strong but increase our lobbying efforts as health care reform takes center stage in Washington, D.C. What will be at stake during the health reform debate is continued consumer access to OT services. At the same time we must continue our new public awareness campaign to help consumers and policymakers more fully appreciate the value we bring to helping people achieve independence and live life to its fullest. Being an AOTA member is an investment in having a voice at the health care reform negotiating table and assuring reimbursement for your services. More than ever before, we need to invest in AOTA as the strong voice of our profession to assure our future.

As a fieldwork supervisor, please help me in this important effort by joining AOTA, renewing your membership, and encouraging your occupational therapy colleagues to do the same.

Penny Moyers Cleveland
AOTA President