



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

March 17, 2017

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
Re: Support for Senate Bill 237 with -1 amendment

Dear Chairwoman Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee,

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society appreciates this opportunity to express support for SB 237, which will create consumer protections to ensure that patients living with chronic and life-threatening conditions have affordable, predictable out-of-pocket costs for the treatments they need.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, often debilitating disease of the central nervous system, affecting more than 8,000 Oregonians. Studies show that early and ongoing treatment with a disease-modifying therapy is the best way to modify the course of the disease, prevent the accumulation of disability, and protect the brain from damage due to MS.

Unfortunately, out-of-pocket expenses for these medications are increasingly unaffordable for people with MS. Continually escalating prices have created a significant barrier to treatment, causing a greater burden for people who already live with a life-altering condition.

For example, a shift in recent years from co-pays to co-insurance for specialty medicines—including MS treatments—has left patients responsible for as much as 40 percent of their drugs' bills. Add in the costs of regular doctor visits, blood tests and MRI exams—all essential for monitoring the progression of MS—and the burden of living with this disease is magnified, adding to the anxiety that already comes with MS.

In a recent survey of people living with MS, nearly half identified cost as the primary financial barrier to obtaining the medications they need. Even special assistance programs offered by drug companies fall short in alleviating the burden. As a result, some individuals living with MS are compelled to make difficult choices, balancing medication cost with those of food, housing, and transportation.

People living with chronic medical conditions should be focusing on their health, on continuing to live their lives fully, and not burdened with obstacles to getting the treatment they need. It is time for change. People with chronic illnesses need to know that they will have access to life-changing medications.

Again, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society urges your support for this bill, which will ensure that all Oregonians are able to have affordable, predictable out-of-pocket costs for the treatments they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linnea Nasman'.

Linnea Nasman, Senior Manager of Advocacy
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Linnea.Nasman@nmss.org / (206) 515-4563

JOIN THE MOVEMENT