



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

December 15, 2020

Re: Support SB 809

Dear Chairman Iden and Members, House Ways and Means Committee:

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (the Society) respectfully urges your support of Senate Bill 809, a bill that will assist people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) to access the medications they need to live their best lives.

In a recent survey of people with MS about access to medications, more than a third reported taking an infused disease modifying therapy. Unfortunately, people living with MS in Michigan have an additional barrier to accessing their infusion therapy. Currently Michigan does not allow for pharmaceutical companies to assist patients with the cost of the administration of infusion therapies as they do with the cost of the actual medication. Michigan is one of only three states with this restriction. While the MS DMTs are expensive medications, many people with MS on an infused treatment report that the challenges come not from the cost of the medication itself, but from the costs associated with the infusion. In fact, when people with MS have shared their insurance Explanation of Benefits (EOB) with us, the costs associated with the infusion can be up to twice as much as the annual price of the medication. We respectfully request today that you remove this barrier to supporting people with the cost of infusions.

MS is an expensive disease to live with and treat, impacting the healthcare system, health plans and of course, families affected by MS. A person with MS spends three times as much out-of-pocket than the average person in employer plans. Disease modifying treatments (DMTs) are approximately 75% of the cost of treating MS. Research shows that early and ongoing treatment with a disease-modifying therapy (DMT) is the best way to modify the course of MS, prevent the accumulation of disability, and protect the brain from damage. Yet, many people living with MS cannot access the medications they need to slow disease progression. Escalating prices are creating significant barriers to treatment, including higher costs, increased stress, and a greater burden for those who already live with a chronic, life-altering condition.

For people living with MS, co-pay assistance drug programs and coupons programs allow them to access the disease modifying therapies (DMTs) they need. As many as 40% of people living with MS rely on some copay assistance to maintain access to their disease-modifying therapy. In 2020, the median price of these therapies was over \$90,000 a year. DMT's can be taken orally, by injection or more recently by infusion. There are currently four infusion therapies approved for MS and many others approved for other chronic conditions and diseases.



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The National MS Society supports the role of physicians and patients to choose the best therapy for each person's individual disease course. Currently one infusion therapy is the only DMT FDA approved for Primary Progressive MS (PPMS), as well as for relapsing forms of MS. PPMS is characterized by worsening neurologic function (accumulation of disability) from the onset of symptoms, without early relapses or remissions. For this reason, it is especially critical for people living with PPMS to receive the infusion therapy if that is their physician's recommendation.

Until we find real solutions to the challenges in our healthcare system that prevent people from affordably accessing the care and treatments they need, we cannot prevent the assistance people need to access their medications. Medications must be affordable, and the process for getting them simple and transparent. Please support Senate Bill 809, which allows for consumers to receive assistance to receive their medications and live their best lives. Should you have any questions, please contact me at holly.pendell@nmss.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Pendell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Holly Pendell
Director, Advocacy & Activist Engagement
National Multiple Sclerosis Society