



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

Michigan House of Representatives Health Policy Committee
Comments on Michigan HB 4353

Holly Pendell
Director, Advocacy & Activist Engagement
Holly.Pendell@nmss.org

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society appreciates the opportunity to submit comments in support of House Bill 4353. We thank the sponsors for introducing legislation that if passed, will assist people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) access the medications they need to live their best lives. We offer our strong support for HB 4353 and urge the committee to move it quickly this session. At its core, HB 4353 is a patient center billed and would bring relief to consumers trying to access affordable medications. For this reason, in addition to the bill's timely passage, we respectfully request that this bill stand alone and that the tie bar with HB 4347 be removed. It would be unfortunate for a bill so targeted for the benefit of patients to be tied up in conflict across business interests.

Copay accumulators (or accumulator adjustment programs) began from the belief that drug manufacturers' patient assistance programs are discouraging patients and their doctors from choosing generics or less-costly prescription drug alternatives. These programs are used to prohibit prescription drug coupons or other forms of charitable assistance from applying towards a patient's annual deductible or out-of-pocket maximum amounts, though the insurers are receiving full payment for the medication.

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, copay accumulators make it more difficult to receive the disease modifying therapies (DMTs) they need. As many as 40% of people living with MS rely on some type of copay assistance to maintain access to their disease-modifying therapy. In 2020, the median price of MS therapies was over \$90,000 a year. DMT's can be taken orally, by injection or more recently by infusion.



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

Most of the drugs have no generic equivalents or therapeutic alternatives, meaning patients do not have lower-cost options. With the implementation of copay accumulator programs, people with MS are experiencing higher cost burdens as they struggle with unexpected expenses during their deductible period.

DMT's and symptom management medications are critical to slow the progression of MS. In 2020, the median price of these therapies was over \$90,000 a year. The three generics currently available cost between \$63,000 and \$65,000 per year. Of the eight products that cost more than the median price, more than half have been on the market for eight years or longer, some as long as 25 years.

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 rip away the band-aids people have come to rely on—like copay assistance programs. Medications must be affordable, and the process for getting them simple and transparent. House Bill 4353 offers provisions that will allow consumers to receive assistance of any kind to pay for their medications and for that assistance to count towards their deductible. Michigan lawmakers have an opportunity to address a significant drug price issue by passing House Bill 4353. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. Please let me know if I can be of assistance to you and your work in the future.