



Ohio Senate Oversight and Government Reform Committee
Opponent Testimony of Holly Pendell
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National MS Society

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Minority Member Craig and Members of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 17 on behalf of the National MS Society and those Ohioans living with MS and their loved ones.

Multiple sclerosis is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body. Symptoms vary from person to person and range from numbness and tingling to walking difficulties, fatigue, dizziness, pain, depression, blindness and paralysis. The progress, severity, and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted but advances in research and treatment are leading to better understanding and moving us closer to a world free of MS.

We write today in opposition to SB 17. The Society opposes many aspects of the legislation that will place an additional burden on Ohioans and their families already financially devastated and emotionally taxed by the COVID pandemic. On top of the current hardships placed on families because of the pandemic, the financial impact of living with MS is high. In 2018 the median price of brand disease modifying therapies (DMTs) increased to \$80,000 and just two years later in 2020, the brand median price is \$91,835. Five MS DMTs are priced at more than \$100,00 per year. In addition to the cost of medications, people with MS can require costly visits to the doctor, hospital, or specialists.

As such we oppose additional requirements on programs critical to the livelihood of vulnerable populations including Medicaid work requirements, lock out periods and asset tests. To lose health care coverage and other basic needs in the middle of a crisis would be devastating to anyone, but for those living with MS or other chronic conditions, it would have a disastrous effect on an individual's physical and emotional health, as well as their financial well-being.

Aside from the direct impact to those living with MS, there is also the concern of cost to the state. Implementing restrictive changes like those in SB 17 means an increased administrative burden, added bureaucracy and higher probability that individuals slip through the cracks. Added paperwork, longer wait times and increased pressure on already taxed state systems are exactly what the legislature should be working to eliminate, not increase. Costs to the state

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would accrue quickly and drastically, with some making estimates well into the tens of millions. These administrative costs will divert resources from programs such as Medicaid, programs whose core goals are to provide supports and services to Ohio's most vulnerable population.

The National MS Society thanks this committee for the opportunity to provide comment and urges this committee not to move forward with SB 17. The state of Ohio and this legislative body has an obligation to assist and protect its residents most in need, now more than ever, including those living with MS.

For questions or additional information contact: Holly Pendell at holly.pendell@nmss.org

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