

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

2012 Legislative Agenda

As Washington has one of the highest incidences of multiple sclerosis (MS) in the nation, we have a special obligation to care for those who live with MS. The National MS Society believes the state has a crucial role in providing a safety net to people living with MS and other chronic diseases. The Legislature must adequately fund services that people living with MS rely on for their basic needs, especially long-term care, Medicaid, Basic Health, and Disability Lifeline, even if that means raising new revenue.

Stop further cuts to the safety net

At least 1800 people with MS rely on Medicaid for their health care needs and many others turn to Basic Health and Disability Lifeline. Due to their disability, people living with MS often have a difficult time holding down a job and the state's health care and disability programs are often the only place they can turn for help. Many people with MS require long term care because of the progressive nature of their MS and we must preserve those services, without a decrease in eligibility or provider rates. The legislature must raise new revenue to support these programs.

Create consumer friendly health insurance exchanges

The National MS Society supports the consumer driven agenda of the Healthy Washington Coalition and believes exchanges should function as marketplaces for high-value coverage that is transparent and accountable, responsive to consumers' needs, user-friendly and stable.

Lower out of pocket costs for people with significant health care needs

MS is a very expensive disease – the average annual health care cost for someone with MS is approximately \$39,000 and average out of pocket costs for someone with MS are twice that of other individuals. The price of MS drugs continues to increase every year and many people with MS have been forced to discontinue their treatment because they can't afford it. Legislation should encourage predictable and transparent pricing while putting a cap on the annual out-of-pocket costs faced by a consumer. Annual caps are in the Affordable Care Act and ensure that extraordinary costs are a shared responsibility between the insurer and the consumer. Support House Bill 2435/Senate Bill 6241.

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National MS Society advocacy in Washington is coordinated by WECAN, the Washington Education Coalition Action Network, a collaborative effort by the Greater Northwest Chapter serving Western and Central Washington, Inland Northwest Chapter serving Eastern Washington, and the Oregon Chapter serving Clark County.