



The Society mobilizes people and resources so that everyone affected by MS can live their best lives as we stop MS in its tracks, restore what has been lost and end MS forever.

The Virginia Chapters of the National MS Society 2016 Advocacy Priorities

Close the Health Insurance Coverage Gap

The National MS Society urges the expansion of the Virginia Medicaid program. Expanding Medicaid is a smart investment that will bridge Virginia's health insurance gap and provide affordable and comprehensive coverage to thousands of Virginians. With an expansion, several hundred Virginians with MS stand to gain critical prescription drug coverage and standard medical benefits such as physician, hospital care and home- and community-based services. Virginia state legislators must act without delay to close the coverage gap and bring our federal tax money back to the Commonwealth.

Support Virginia's Caregivers

There are 1.03 million family caregivers in Virginia and together they provide \$11.87 billion of uncompensated care every year. A 2012 National Alliance for Caregiving survey shows that caregivers of people with MS spend about 24 hours a week caring for their loved ones. Of these caregivers, 64% are emotionally drained, 32% experience depression and 22% have lost a job due to caregiving responsibilities. We advocate for efforts that ensure caregivers are well prepared and supported in their roles including providing opportunities and resources for respite. We ask that the Virginia legislature provide funds to grow the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program.

Create Livable Communities

We advocate for programs and services that provide people with MS the opportunity to live safely and confidently in their homes and communities. Having stable, affordable and accessible housing; access to appropriate transit services; and opportunities to remain actively engaged in the workforce and in the community helps to increase quality of life and promote independence for people living with disabilities.

Increase Access to Care in Rural Areas

People living with MS in rural areas tend to be diagnosed later than those living in urban areas; are more likely to report that MS interferes with their quality of life and are less likely to be taking one of the MS disease-modifying therapies (Buchanan, et al, 2006). We support efforts to increase access to specialized MS care in rural areas of the Commonwealth.

Fund Critical Resources

As legislators work to build and balance the state budget, we ask that they protect and prioritize services for Virginia's most vulnerable citizens.