

Another Kansas Legislative Session has come to an end! Kansas MS activists were once again busy and engaged in the legislative process. In 2017, Kansas MS activists testified in committees, sent emails via our MS Action Alert system, made phone calls, attended rallies in Topeka and shared our advocacy objectives with health care professionals and people living with MS within their respective communities. You will find a summary of the session below.

Kansas State Legislature Highlights From 2017

The 2017 Kansas State Legislative Session began January 9 and wrapped up its work on June 10, culminating with the override of Governor Brownback's veto of the tax bill passed by the Legislature, which rolled back the historic tax cuts that were passed five years ago. These tax cuts were seen by many as the cause of Kansas' projected budget shortfall of \$887 million through June 2019. The tax bill is expected to raise \$1.2 billion over the next two years. It was the second longest session in Kansas' history.

The possibility of a special session still looms, as the state anxiously awaits the ruling in the Gannon school finance lawsuit. The budget passed by the legislature increases school finance by \$300 million over the next two years, but schools are asking for \$600 million more. The Kansas Supreme Court has the case scheduled for July 18.

This session, The National MS Society introduced SB 82. SB 82 proposed adding patient protections to the use of step therapy in all insurance plans sold in the state of Kansas. A hearing was held with testimony provided by numerous patient advocacy groups and physician groups. Compelling testimony was provided by Amber Wagnon, a Nurse Practitioner from Neurology Consultants of Kansas. Amber spoke about the harms of step therapy to the MS patients that she treats. While the MS Society is disappointed that SB 82 did not make it out of committee this year, we acknowledge it can take time for legislative progress to occur. We plan to reintroduce similar legislation in 2018.

Another notable moment of the session was Dr. Sharon Lynch's testimony in support of HB 2031. HB 2031 proposed the creation of a palliative care and

quality of life advisory council to assist in the creation of a palliative care consumer and professional information and education program. The bill was voted out of committee, passed in the House, but did not proceed through the Senate.

Joey's Law, SB 74, was signed into law this session. Under this bill, people will be able to voluntarily have distinctive notations on a driver's license or state issued ID card, use a display placard within the vehicle, or place a sticker on their license plate to alert law enforcement that a person has a condition that can cause cognitive challenges.

Some KanCare consumer successes also were passed this session. A proviso to the budget passed stating that the State cannot alter the structure of Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) waivers, which could result in unnecessary confusion and reduction of services.. It also requires a report to the Kansas Legislature about any plans to do so in the future. The first report is due January 2018. Also of note: An increase in HCBS provider rates of 4% in 2018; 3% in 2019, restoration of the 2016 cut of \$2.1 million to the Senior Care Act, restoration of the 2016 4% cut to Medicaid, increased funding to safety net clinics and to the community mental health centers. And finally, the Medicaid Office of Inspector General will be created within the Attorney General's office.

Thank you for your continued support of the National MS Society advocacy issues in Kansas! Enjoy your summer and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

All the best,

Kari Rinker