

Greetings, Delegate Johnson, Delegate White, and House Health and Government Operations Committee members! My name is Sharon D Long and I live in Fort Washington. I have MS, a chronic disease of the brain, optic nerves, and spinal cord. MS has significantly impacted my spine in that I have difficulty walking and standing. I am here to share my story as it relates to Step Therapy and urge this committee to **FAVORABLY REPORT HB785**.

I was officially diagnosed the day before Thanksgiving 2018. My family and I are daily processing MS' impact "on the fly", thinking "outside the box" to get things done. It's become a superpower for me as I **continue contributing to society by working full-time, paying my taxes, going to church, and volunteering. I'm before you now for All of us with MS, especially those who can't speak for themselves.**

Come into my doctor's appointment with me: We're in the examination room. My doctor and I are wrapping up and he's writing a prescription for a med that's been successfully working for my MS symptoms. In comes an insurance representative, who doesn't know me, and he interrupts my doctor and sets aside the prescription saying I'm required to try an alternative drug for 6 months to a year before I can go back to what I Already know works. (Keep in mind only my doctor's taken an oath to do no harm. Has the insurance representative or company? **NO!**) My preferred med is held "hostage" and I take the alternative drug, getting sicker and sicker. Then, I'm finally returned to the drug my doctor originally prescribed. What's happening with my body now? It's in "shock"- MS symptoms flaring, side effects from the alternative drug are manifesting, and the drug that had been working for me **NO LONGER WORKS!**

I was just treated like a "guinea pig" for the insurance company's bottom line profits **3 TIMES**- profits from (1.) the initial prescription that had been working for me, (2.) the alternative drug, and (3.) now Anything new I'll need to get back to an "MS norm" and address the new non-MS-related side effects!

Hand-over-fist, the insurance company is GETTING PAID while I SUFFER!

While the topic TODAY is MS and Step Therapy, tomorrow it could easily be a drug you or a loved one are on for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, or arthritis. Don't be naive and assume you won't be put in the same position in the future. For these insurers, it's about the \$\$\$ Not your or my health and wellbeing! Thank you for your time and I urge this committee to **FAVORABLY REPORT HB785**.