

National Multiple Sclerosis Society: Testimony in Support of SB 1019
Shannon Wood, Director of Advocacy and Policy
Senate Finance Committee

Chair Beidle, members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 1019 on behalf of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a disease of the central nervous system characterized by inflammation, demyelination and degenerative changes. Symptoms vary by individual and range from numbness or tingling, to walking difficulties, fatigue, dizziness, pain, depression, blindness and paralysis as well as cognitive dysfunction. People with MS may experience relapses and remissions of neurological symptoms, or symptoms may progress over time. Nearly 1 million people in the United States— more than twice the previously reported number—are living with MS, according to a landmark study.

As we discuss access to prescription drugs, it is important to note that less than 5% of the Society's annual revenues come from pharmaceutical companies. We do not take any corporate funding tied to our advocacy issues or outcomes.

Studies show that early and ongoing treatment with a disease-modifying therapy (DMT) is the best way to prevent disease progression, relapses and worsening disability. Approximately 20 different DMTs can currently be used to treat MS.

As of July 2023, the median brand price of MS DMTs was over \$103,000. Time on the market also does not guarantee a reduction in cost as 5 out of 7 of the DMTs that have been on the market for at least 13 years are priced over \$100,000 annually. The rising costs of drugs and changing insurance coverage disproportionately affect people with MS, causing delays and disruptions in treatment.

A study recently released by the National MS Society showed 40% of people surveyed who take a DMT altered or stopped taking their medication due to the high cost, and more than half of respondents are concerned about being able to afford their DMT over the next few years.

We support SB 1019 because it would require PBMs to pass 85% of rebate savings directly to patients at the pharmacy counter. By passing this bill, lawmakers would ensure that patients pay significantly less for essential prescriptions, improving affordability and accessibility for Marylanders.

We are grateful for the opportunity to testify on this important legislation and urge a favorable report. For any questions regarding the Society's position, please contact Shannon Wood, Director of Advocacy and Policy at shannon.wood@nmss.org.