



National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society

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**The Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing - February 25, 2011  
Testimony on the State Budget: Energy Assistance and Operation Fuel**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Susan Raimondo and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy and Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter. I am also the family caregiver representative to the CT Long Term Care Advisory Council.

First, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter would like to thank the Legislature and our state government for their support of energy assistance programs.

The National MS Society is urging the Appropriations Committee, the Legislature and OPM to allocate \$1.1 million for Operation Fuel in FY 2012.

Operation Fuel has recently closed their program for winter assistance because there are no funds to meet the current needs of our state's residents. It is the middle of February and there will continue to be many cold days and nights were our neighbors will have no heat. The request for FY 2012 could help prevent a similar short fall next year.

As many of you know, Operation Fuel is the only resource for year-round energy assistance. Access to year-round energy assistance is crucial for our members living with multiple sclerosis because individuals with multiple sclerosis can suffer from severe heat sensitivity. Heat aggravates MS symptoms in over 80% of patients. Increased fatigue, weakness and visual disturbances are just a few of the problems that may occur when the body's interior temperature rises.

This worsening of symptoms can be relieved by cooling. Air conditioning for people with MS is not a luxury, it is a medical necessity.

Operation Fuel has been part of the solution in helping our members afford their summer electric bills because it has been able to provide access to year-round assistance. The National MS Society also provides small grants to our members to help afford electricity, but these are not enough. Our financial assistance has collaborated with Operation Fuel to stretch the types of assistance available to our members.

It is crucial for Operation Fuel to receive adequate funding. We urge you to include the \$1.1 million in the FY 2012 for year-round energy assistance that includes non-heat energy assistance that could be available through Operation Fuel.

Thank you.