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**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 230
and in
Opposition of Proposed Cuts for Medicaid LIA Benefits**

Good afternoon!

I am Susan Tukey, an advocate volunteer from the MS Society and I want to thank the Human Services Committee for allowing me to make an appeal to you today on behalf of keeping the Medicaid Low Income Benefits Package the same as regular Medicaid.

I am here as a friend of people with MS and others who have low incomes and are really in need of this package to remain in place. The people needing this package are medically and physically fragile individuals who need complex care and without it their existence could not continue!!!

During the last 17 years working with MS I have seen it work in miraculous ways and I have also advocated in borderline cases.....In these instances it is very tricky and also terribly time consuming!!!! I have spent long arduous hours getting names, payment schedules and pertinent info particular to the client to make sure everything matched for necessities.....After nearly a week of playing telephone tag and getting to the right people I found that none of the programs met my special needs situation and that only a high priced insurance would work. Had I been able to have had an easy access to this information I could have easily cut to the chase and had the problem solved quickly....it took due diligence to hunt down this information. Senate Bill 230 would help to solve this challenge; I feel this type of information should be formalized in a resource called Community Choices. Most people doing the calling might be clients, not having the stamina to tough it out like I did and it would service everyone going through the process in a more professional and insurance friendly manner.

Please pass Senate Bill 230, An Act Concerning Community Choices for Long-Term Care and Disability Services.

Many wonderful programs exist under LIA Medicaid. Presently Medicaid is reviewing a friend's prescription for a Walk-Aide, a type of assistive technology which sends electrical impulses to the legs and aids tremendously in his walking skills. Without this equipment he is subject to extreme weakness and falls frequently which could eventually disable him totally. Such updated rehabilitative resources must be available to Medicaid beneficiaries.

Another person with multiple sclerosis is being considered for Gilenya, a new MS drug that is much more effective in reducing progression of disability. As a Medicaid patient, using this medication will be proactive in helping to maintain her mobility.

Another MS Society client is waiting for Social Security Disability Insurance, and has appealed her denial. She has Medicaid LIA and needs home care. If the LIA benefits are reduced, she will end up needing a nursing home.

Occupational, physical and speech therapies are also critical for individuals with MS and others with debilitating chronic diseases. These therapies can either help place a client back into a marketable position or at least remain a viable member of society, moving them towards independent living.

All of these benefits are important to daily independent living. Falls are kept to a minimum, hospital stays reduced, and ultimately lessening the need for overcrowded convalescent homes.

It is of greatest importance that people who are struggling with illness, have dignity at the same time!!!!

Any alteration to the benefits within Medicaid for Low Income Adults, could be a death sentence for many. Medications would cease, all nursing programs would end, and therapy would be non-existent!!! Just remember this, the MS motto is JOIN THE MOVEMENT.....MOVEMENT IS NOT GUARANTEED!!!!

We want a guarantee for all people with disabilities.....We want the access to good meds, good therapy, good durable aids and good care!!!! Our only hope for people of low or no income is YOU!!!! Please vote accordingly....vote FOR the retention of LIA Medicaid support and against the way it stands in the Governor's bill.

Thank you.