



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

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Insurance and Real Estate Committee, Public Hearing March 15, 2012

**Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No. 5486, AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH
INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AND BREAST
THERMOGRAPHY.**

My name is Peter Wade, MD. I am the medical director for neurology at The Mandell Comprehensive MS Center here in Hartford, CT. I am also on the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Our MS Center opened a little more than four years ago. We are caring for almost 1,000 patients suffering from multiple sclerosis.

We request that you pass HB5486, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Prescription Drugs and Breast Thermography. My staff and I support Section 1 of the bill which would cap out of pocket expenses for prescription drugs including specialty drugs at \$1,000 for individuals and \$2,000 for families.

The cost of the various medications to treat the disease itself as well as its consequences (pain, spasticity, bowel and bladder dysfunction, depression, fatigue, limited mobility and ambulation, etc.) can be prohibitive.

The disease modifying medications limit the number of attacks or relapses and are proven to delay disability. They work by disrupting the neurologic pathways and processes that lead to brain tissue damage and scarring. Untreated, 75% of patients with MS will have limited mobility and require assistance with ambulation within 10-15 years. The age of diagnosis is often in the late teens to early 20's. The current available medications effectively decrease the number of attacks and delay the accumulation of disability allowing patients to maintain function and continue to remain employed.

The burden of medication costs is being shifted from the insurers to the insured. These medications are very expensive to discover and produce. The results of this cost shifting often limits access to medications.

I myself suffer from MS. The copays for the various medications that I take each month are now \$265/month. The resultant out of pocket cost is \$3,180/year. This is just a single personal example of the costs often incurred by patients suffering from MS. Many of my patients are on fixed or limited incomes. The high co-pay costs are often beyond their means to afford and they have to go without these critical treatments.

Passage of HB5840, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Prescription Drugs and Breast Thermography will help provide access to these critically needed medications that help patients MS lead healthier and more productive lives.

Regards,

Peter Wade, M.D.