



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Connecticut Chapter
659 Tower Avenue, First Floor
Hartford, CT 06112-1269
Tel +1.860.913.2550
Fax +1.860.761.2466
www.ctfightsMS.org

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 11, 2014

Testimony in Support of Funding for Operation Fuel and Year-Round Energy Assistance

Senator Duff, Representative Flexer and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Susan Raimondo and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy and Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, CT Chapter. We want to thank Governor Malloy and the Legislature for their long standing support of year-round energy assistance and Operation Fuel.

We are asking that the Appropriations Committee fund Operation Fuel at \$2.2 million for FY 15.

Operation Fuel is the state's only source of funds for year-round energy assistance. Year-round energy assistance is important for residents of the state of Connecticut including those living with chronic illnesses like MS.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision. The progress, severity, and specific symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from one person to another. There is still no cure for MS.

Heat sensitivity and multiple sclerosis

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.

Access to year-round energy assistance makes a substantial difference in the lives of individuals for whom air conditioning is not a mere luxury, but a medical necessity.

In Connecticut, state and federal funds only cover the costs of winter heating for low income residents. There are no government funds available to assist families with keeping the lights on, maintaining hot water for bathing, refrigeration or cooling. Operation Fuel is Connecticut's only resource for year-round energy assistance.

The National MS Society, Connecticut Chapter is asking the General Assembly and the Administration to provide \$2.2 million in funds for Operation Fuel.

Thank you.

Susan Raimondo
Senior Director, Advocacy and Programs
National MS Society, Connecticut Chapter