



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

April 4, 2019

Honorable Senator Sara Gleser, Chair
Senator Dallas Heard, Vice Chair
Senators Fagan, Knopp, and Monnes-Anderson
Senate Human Services Committee

RE: Support SB 1035 RELIEF Caregiver Respite

Chair Gleser, Vice Chair Heard, and committee members,

I am writing today on behalf of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Oregon Chapter, in support of SB 1035 Caregiver Respite.

MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system. MS interrupts the flow of information within the brain and between the brain and body. Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis. There is currently no cure for MS and since the disease is not fatal, a person can live with the disease their entire life. Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50 and it is the leading cause of disability in young adults.

For people and families living with MS, access to a caregiver respite program would be invaluable. In Oregon, it is estimated that the approximately 470,000 un-compensated, family caregivers contribute \$5.7 billion worth of care each year to the overall economy. Caregiving is stressful, expensive, and takes a huge physical, emotional, and financial toll on the person providing the care. According to AARP, a survey of 900 caregivers reported that 71% had emotional stress with 75% stating that respite care would be helpful. The National MS Society strongly feels that this bill would enable caregivers across Oregon the chance to have a break from this emotionally taxing responsibility, if even for a day.

The proposed benefit is limited to a maximum of \$500 per month and can be used for Adult Day Services, Home Care Services, or other DHS approved services that would enable the regular caregiver a day away. The bill directs DHS Aging and People with Disabilities to convene a stakeholder's group and Medicaid waiver proposal to provide needed respite services here in Oregon. Please reach out with any questions on the bill and its affects on people living with MS.

Regards,

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