



National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society

The Honorable Senator Deb Patterson  
Senate Committee on Health Care

**RE: Support HB 2508 OHA reimbursement using telemedicine**

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Knopp, committee members,

The National MS Society believes that telehealth allows states to implement innovative health policy reforms that achieve significant cost savings and improve health outcomes for people living with multiple sclerosis (MS). MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and the brain and the body. Symptoms vary from person to person and range from numbness and tingling to walking difficulties, fatigue, dizziness, pain, depression, blindness and paralysis. More than 1 million Americans live with MS.

Telehealth is, along with being a health care delivery system, can also make major impacts in health access and health equity. Access to internet connections able to handle video calls for telehealth appointments is limited in minority, rural, and poorer communities. According to the census bureau, nearly 36% of Black and 30% of Hispanic households had no broadband or computer access in their homes.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, equitable access across all modalities is key.

The MS Society also believes there are opportunities for improving health care access through telehealth, especially for individuals with mobility restrictions, and particularly in rural and underserved communities. Restrictions on telehealth, such as geographical limitations on service, limitations on patient setting, inadequate or no provider compensation, and restrictions on eligible or compatible technology, all act as barriers that prevent people living with MS from realizing the full benefits of telehealth. **We are very happy to see all these areas protected in HB 2508 and we thank the bill sponsors.**

During the medical health crisis created by COVID-19, the federal government took rapid action to expand states ability to provide telehealth services to their citizens. This expanded access has led to a significant increase of patients using telehealth programs, with a national average of an 11,000 percent<sup>2</sup> increase, with some places seeing telehealth service increase up of 60,000 percent.<sup>3</sup>

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society supports HB 2508 and **urges a “yes” vote** in committee.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/2017/comm/digital-divide-percent.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.healthcarediver.com/news/medicare-seniors-telehealth-covid-coronavirus-cms-trump/578685/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/116/crec/2020/06/17/modified/CREC-2020-06-17-pt1-PgS3038-2.htm> (It is a long document so search for the first use of “Telehealth” to jump to the start of the section)