



**National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society**

### **What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?**

- 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.

In a longitudinal study of over 2,000 people with MS, **over 65 percent expressed difficulty walking** and 15 percent required a wheelchair or scooter.

**People living with MS in rural areas** tend to be **diagnosed later** than those living in urban areas; are more likely to report that MS interferes with their quality of life; and are less likely to be taking one of the MS disease-modifying therapies (Buchanan, et al, 2006).

### **Background on Telemedicine**

At least 20 states and the District of Columbia have required private insurance plans to cover telemedicine services at reimbursement rates equal to an in-person consultation. Forty-four states reimburse under Medicaid for limited services, some restricting reimbursement to only rural or low provider access areas.

The University of Miami (UM) initiated telehealth services in 1973 and claims the first telehealth service in Florida, the first use of nurse practitioners in telemedicine in the nation, and the first telemedicine program in correctional facilities.

# Increase Access to Telemedicine Services

## **Request**

Support HB 751, SB 70 and Senate PCB 7028, the “Florida Telemedicine Act” to ensure quality and affordable access to health care services for Floridians living with multiple sclerosis.

**Increased access to telemedicine services** can increase the effectiveness of patients’ management of chronic diseases, like MS, thereby improving patient outcomes.

## **The Florida Telemedicine Act (HB 751, SB 70 and SPB 7028):**

- Defines key components for the practice of telemedicine, including a registration process for out-of-state health care providers;
- Establishes coverage parity between telemedicine and face-to-face care and removes the “face-to-face requirement” for reimbursement;
- Allows insurers to limit telemedicine coverage to in-network providers;
- Florida Medicaid (AHCA) must make public a report on the uses and costs of telemedicine to members of the Florida Legislature no later than January, 2017; and
- May authorize the negotiation of interstate compacts to allow for the practice of telemedicine across state lines.
- Would require that telemedicine equipment be able to provide the health care provider the same information that would have been obtained in an in-person encounter, and the technology must allow the health care provider to meet or exceed prevailing standards of care.