

COMMENT TO THE FASTER CURES EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL MS SOCIETY

The National MS Society appreciates that Philanthropy Advisory Service (PAS) undertook a thorough evaluation of our comprehensive response to multiple sclerosis. We are dedicated to achieving the vision of a world free of MS; having an independent review by the high-caliber PAS team validates our progress and renews our commitment to pursue that vision.

Our response to the complexities of MS is a strategic, diverse research portfolio aimed at stopping the disease progression, restoring function, and ending the disease forever. Our funding and leadership have provided new ideas, targets, pathways and tools, and in fact have produced profound shifts in thinking. Critical advances have also come from our committees, task forces, advocacy efforts, international workshops and training programs.

We are proud that PAS recognizes that our research outcomes have catapulted the field forward, identifying the Society as the “single organization serving as a catalyst for new research in MS.”

We respectfully disagree with PAS’s philosophy with respect to Intellectual Property and believe its approach to IP could actually impede translational research progress by inhibiting commercialization of promising therapeutics. As a non-profit, we know that every promising, early-stage therapeutic that we fund will need a larger partner if it is to move into clinical trials. We don’t want to put up barriers to such partnerships. Our IP approach ensures maximum flexibility, and has proven results. In the short time that has elapsed since PAS evaluated our organization, our Fast Forward subsidiary, which requires that prospective company partners own their IP, has entered into nine agreements with industry partners. In the same time period, there is no evidence that the PAS view on IP has led to the development of any new therapies in MS.

Despite our differences on this approach, we are grateful for the opportunity to have worked with the PAS team. We are very proud of the progress described in the report and leadership role we’ve played, and are committed to constantly improving our processes and expanding our funding of the very best MS research in the world. New research ventures urgently await funding, and any one of them may hold the key to ending MS forever.