



March 25, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Health & Government Operations Committee
House Office Building – Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 1009: Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS/WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

Clinical treatments should only be determined by scientific evidence in accordance with applicable regulatory standards. Currently, inadequate scientific evidence exists for endorsing the use of psychedelics to treat any psychiatric disorder except within the context of approved investigational studies. Psychedelics are already progressing through the FDA's drug development pipeline, with numerous clinical trials underway for conditions like depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders. FDA-approved psychedelic medications are anticipated soon, with psilocybin for depression receiving a breakthrough designation. There's ongoing research in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. Bypassing FDA approval isn't necessary as it ensures safety and efficacy. MPS/WPS support continued research and therapeutic discovery into psychedelic agents with the same scientific integrity and regulatory standards applied to other promising therapies in medicine.

MPS/WPS also support as amended Senate Bill 1009: Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances (SB 1009) because of the aforementioned preliminary research involving psychedelics for the treatment of serious and disabling conditions such as treatment-resistant depression and posttraumatic stress disorder have stimulated growing interest in the therapeutic potential of these agents. The use of psychedelics, however, can pose short-term and long-term risks, including hallucinogen use disorder and other mental health-related risks. Thus, given growing public interest and commercial interest, and the ever-compelling need to advance treatments for challenging psychiatric conditions, MPS/WPS fear the risk that the use



of psychedelics for purported clinical goals may outpace evidence-based research and regulatory approval.

Finally, MPS/WPS would caution this body on the outright legalization of psychedelics. Remember that the reason that research of psychedelics was halted in the 70s was because of suicides. Supervised use in therapy is one thing, and it is being evaluated as we speak, but unsupervised legal use is very dangerous

For all the reasons above and with the above-referenced amendment, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 1009 as amended. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee