

Good afternoon. My name is Eileen Brewer and I live in Columbia, MD and I am here to ask you to support HB 0548. I am the board president of Clusterbusters, a nonprofit organization that supports people with cluster headache, one of the most painful conditions known to medicine. There is no cure but there are potential treatments. For more than 20 years, we have been driving research on new treatments and the most promising of these are psychedelics.

Most of the attention and funding for psychedelic research has been focused on mental health. Millions of people need effective treatments for things like PTSD and depression. There are also millions of people living with pain conditions who are desperate for safe and effective treatments. 1 in 3 people will experience chronic pain in their lifetime and we have very limited tools to help them. Yoga and mindfulness are things that we currently recommend so that people can accept their pain, but they are not treatments and they do not end suffering.

Psychedelics can help pain. There have been more than 40 studies conducted on psychedelics and pain in recent years. One thing we have learned from this research and the data gathered by Clusterbusters and other citizen scientists is that the regimens for treating pain conditions do not look like the protocols for treating mental health conditions. Every condition is different. While mental health patients may need therapists or facilitators, pain patients likely don't. For example, many people with cluster headache take small doses of psilocybin every 5 days until their cycle ends. This would not be feasible, practical, or affordable if they had to go to a therapist for 6 hours every 5 days. But with a little education, thousands of clusterheads are using psychedelics safely and effectively at home. By sharing information about this treatment, we are saving the lives of desperate people who consider and attempt suicide more often than the general population just to escape the pain. We know that psychedelic treatments are saving lives now, but the research for FDA approval for pain conditions may take decades more, IF we find the money to pay for that costly research.

I am sitting before you today without pain after living with it constantly and relentlessly for more than 30 years. I tried to take my life twice during that time to escape the suffering. I didn't have much of a life during those times anyway. The work of Clusterbusters and others in the psychedelic space combined with personal exploration led me to find a treatment that works and a life worth living, but I had to break the law to do it.

I am a mother of two beautiful children, a wife of 20 years, the PTA president at my son's school, a Girl Scout troop leader, a volunteer, and an event coordinator. There are millions of people just like me who deserve equitable and affordable access to psychedelics, and education on their safe use rather than prohibition-era scare tactics and criminalization. This bill is a necessary first step in finding ways to provide that. Please vote in favor of HB 0548. Thank you.