

House Bill 0548, Favorable Testimony

Good day. My name is Zachary Larson-Rabin, and I am writing in support of the Psychedelics Task Force bill, HB 548 / SB 1009. I hold a Ph.D. in plant genetics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and have worked in both research and industry in the U.S. and overseas. Although I am originally from Iowa, my wife was born and raised in Baltimore, and we have chosen to make our lives here, raising our children as Marylanders. Our family is committed to public service, particularly on issues such as working to ensure access to appropriate interventions for critical medical needs. My father-in-law, who himself served in the Maryland Department of Human Services for over 30 years, suffered from Alzheimer's and was helped by a cannabinoid-based medication when very little else worked—medication that would not have been available had this legislative body not moved to decriminalize cannabis. I have personally been helped, mentally and even spiritually, by psychedelics, and I would like others in Maryland to be able to access the same benefits.

My family and I moved back to Maryland 10 years ago, and I am regularly encouraged by witnessing how Maryland's state legislature is often at the leading edge of beneficial progress. I believe that this bill to create a task force to evaluate how the state might engage with psychedelics is an example of such progress-oriented action.

It should be clear to all lawmakers that action needs to be taken to review and address the legal status of psychedelics, as well as developing a plan for remedying the criminal status of psychedelics-related victims of the drug war. There is broad public interest in psychedelics due to the many recent health-related psychedelic discoveries, publicized in the mainstream media. People learn about these developments and ask whether their own health issues could benefit. There is also growing interest within the U.S. government for psychedelic-assisted healing, including, for example, the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by military combat veterans. Moreover, the Food and Drug Administration has designated the active ingredient of psychedelic mushrooms as a "breakthrough therapy" for its usefulness in treating Major Depressive Disorder. As state legislatures around the country create their own psychedelics-related task forces and laws, many Marylanders are wondering whether our state will meet the challenge.

HB 548 / SB 1009 is well-crafted to develop a capable task force with a broad scope of psychedelics-related issues to consider. Such a task force will be able to take a methodical and comprehensive approach to evaluating the current scientific knowledge of the safety and effectiveness of the different psychedelic medicines, as well as considering the best practices by other states, before making recommendations to the Maryland legislature. The task force will be charged with considering whether Maryland should create a licensed psychedelic access framework, perhaps like that of the state of Oregon, which recently set up a licensing scheme for psilocybin mushroom growers, therapeutic usage centers, and psychedelic therapeutic facilitators. The task force would also be charged with considering a novel approach, the Psychedelic Users Permit. This pioneering permitting concept would require Marylanders to complete an educational course before receiving an identification card that allows them buy psychedelics within the state. Even without a permit, however, the educational component is vital—psychedelics are generally quite safe if used according to known best practices, but the information vacuum caused by the drug war has resulted in limited public knowledge of those best practices.

I urge the Committee to vote to establish this task force to recommend how Maryland can integrate the benefits of psychedelics into our state, while reducing the risks involved therein. Please give your support to HB 548 / SB 1009.

Respectfully,

Zachary Larson-Rabin

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