

# **A Coop Testimony 2026 Senate.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andrew Coop

Position: FAV

Good afternoon. My name is Andrew Coop, and I hold a doctorate (PhD) from the University of Bristol in the UK. I have worked on the chemistry and pharmacology of substances with the potential for abuse my whole career, receiving significant NIH funding. I am Associate Dean for Students at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, I am a leader of medical psychedelic education at the University. I have worked with the US Department of Justice as an expert witness in criminal trials concerned with psychedelics, and I serve as Chair of the Task Force on the Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances.

**I support SB0336** - Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances  
- Extension.

The Task Force is studying four naturally occurring substances: psilocybin/psilocin (from fungi), mescaline (from cacti), and dimethyltryptamine (from plants)--all of which possess low toxicity, low abuse potential, and no known fatal human dose. These substances affect mood and perception, and have been used for millennia in spiritual ceremonies. While unique risks exist, clinical trials show efficacy for treatment-resistant depression, cancer-related anxiety, support for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain and headache, and more.

Scientists have shown the effects are almost certainly due to what is called neurogenesis and metaplasticity. In diseases of the brain, where connections between brain cells (neurons) are different - psychedelics create both new neurons and "correct" connections between the neurons. Debate continues as to whether the beneficial effects are the physiological effects, the psychedelic (spiritual) effects, but are almost certainly a combination of both

The task force released a report, A Pathway Forward, outlining a step-wise vision for medical psychedelics, supervised-adult use, and eventually commercial sales for qualifying individuals. The extension allows additional feedback from the public of Maryland, along with further input from qualified experts as advisors, to carefully and thoughtfully develop proposed regulatory approaches to ensure the benefits of psychedelics are accessible to all adults, while ensuring safety is paramount.

Citizens of Maryland are seeking these compounds, and need a safe, regulated, and accessible market. I fully support SB 0336.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Coop', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Coop, Ph.D.

Professor and Associate Dean for Students  
University of Maryland School of Pharmacy  
20 N. Pine Street, Baltimore MD 21201  
410 706 2029  
[acoop@rx.umaryland.edu](mailto:acoop@rx.umaryland.edu)

Home Address:  
9462 Ridgeview Drive  
Columbia, MD 21046

---

Resources:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6851782/>  
<https://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/sciadv.abp8283>  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32098487/>  
<https://reporter.nih.gov/search/GQyhb6SXwEG-8OMfl18azA/project-details/10187739>  
News release: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/johns-hopkins-medicine-receives-first-federal-grant-for-psychedelic-treatment-research-in-50-years>  
<https://psychedelicinvest.com/psychedelic-laws/>  
<https://nida.nih.gov/news-events/meetings-events/2022/01/nih-workshop-psychedelics-therapeutics-gaps-challenges-opportunities>  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0269881114548296?journalCode=jopa>  
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/article-abstract/2772630>  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-021-01336-3>  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41593-023-01316-5>  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41386-022-01389-z>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10661823>  
<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?term=psychedelic&locStr=Maryland&country=United%20States&state=Maryland&checkSpell=>  
Task Force Report:  
[https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MCA/Ch793,Ch792%282024%29\\_2025%2810%29.pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MCA/Ch793,Ch792%282024%29_2025%2810%29.pdf)

# Supporting SB0336.pdf

Uploaded by: Andrew Rogalski

Position: FAV

Supporting SB0336  
Full Support (FAV)

Andrew Rogalski, PharmD, BCPS  
11 Wagon Shed Ln  
Middletown, MD

I am a licensed Maryland pharmacist and have studied the clinical potential of the use of natural psychedelics and have reviewed the previous Task Force report in detail. I am writing in support of HB 0427.

I believe strongly that the Task force has done an excellent job highlighting the potential benefits, risks, and clinical implementations of their recommendations toward increasing access to natural psychedelics. Further, it is notable and exemplary that they have undertaken this effort with a critical lens of equity and inclusion. I wholeheartedly support the continuation of their important work in regards to developing a complete and careful legislative framework and honing their recommendations into actionable items for the legislature.

Secondly, I believe strongly that the trajectory toward legalization of natural psychedelics is the right choice for our state. This class of treatments is a novel strategy for the treatment of PTSD and major depressive disorder (MDD). Considering other populations at high risk for PTSD and MDD such as previously or currently incarcerated persons, crime victims, military, and first responders, Maryland is home to a significant number of potential patients who otherwise cannot access these uniquely effective treatments. This state contains a large catchment of active and former military and first responders, and many more are included if you consider a small driving radius from our state border including dozens of federal agencies.

While I support access to these treatments on their clinical basis, the potential for state revenue generation through licensing and taxes are also immense. It is my opinion that the catchment population that could benefit and would purchase these products is likely underestimated as folks like myself intend to promote and advocate these treatments to at-risk groups in the entire region. I strongly believe that the total market potential likely exceeds the \$22 million estimate by the Johns Hopkins report.

From my clinical and constituent perspective, I hope you choose to pass this bill in pursuit of creating an access pathway for natural psychedelics use in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Andrew Rogalski, PharmD, BCPS

# Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Andrew Rogalski

Position: FAV

To whom it may concern,

The purpose of this letter is to elaborate on physical health and mental health conditions and how psilocybin mushrooms have improved these conditions with only a few experiences. Please note, that my psilocybin “trip” experiences were not administered or monitored by any medical experts. I would like to willingly share my improvements with any committee that is willing to listen and review this testimony as evidence for potential physical and mental health benefits in hopes that’s Maryland would open the door to medical treatment for other people with similar conditions as me. I pray the Task Force will be able to help others in the world through the use of psilocybin mushrooms and a guided expert.

My name is Sean David O’Neil. I am an active-duty Marine Corps veteran and a single father. My military service has negatively affected my back creating constant back pain day and night. Some days are worse than others. I also suffer from depression and some PTSD. I refuse to talk about any depression or any PTSD regarding my military service. However, I will speak on my civilian mental health experiences.

My two young kids lost their mother, my fiancé (Nikki Renee Denlinger), in April of 2024 due to a rare form of cancer. She was diagnosed in December of 2021 right after we purchased our first home together. The financial burden of affording our new home and the weight of raising the kids while I must work a job with an unstable work schedule, was overwhelming. I was suffering from depression, stress, and physical pain due to the stress. I lost my appetite and had suicidal thoughts. I signed up for therapy through the Veterans Affairs (VA), which I was only allotted approximately 45 mins per month. They offered “in-person” visits, but it wasn’t the visit itself that was in-effective for my treatment, it was the time. I required more frequent sessions with a therapist than 45 mins per month.

I injured my back while shoveling snow and left me bedridden for 2 days. This causes more stress with missing work and losing income. Please understand, the physical limitations further compounded stress, anxiety, and depression. I had to rely on others to help me with basic duties such as watching the kids and manual labor around the house.

A friend of mine mentioned that medical experts were underway in some states for treating people with mental health and pain management through the means of psilocybin mushrooms. I was extremely hesitant because I grew up in Baltimore City, Maryland. Let me detail that it was the **INNER CITY** of Baltimore. It is not a walk in the park. I could elaborate further on how bad the city is in crime and drugs. I grew up watching family die from overdosing. I'm not going to elaborate on the details of drug use in the inner cities. However, because of my childhood and witnessing the negative effects drugs had on people, I was very hesitant on considering marijuana or psilocybin mushrooms as being beneficial in any way. And my understanding was limited to such things. I only knew them as bad, dangerous, and evil.

However, after researching online, and speaking to others who I trust closely, some with my life, how the "NATURAL" drugs can help people. This is viewed in communities around the world today as "Holistic Medicine". I love learning about cultures from around the world and ancient history. And I've heard about how other cultures and ancient cultures have benefited from psychedelics, psilocybin being of one such psychedelics. I have never been interested in drugs, and I've never smoked a cigarette in my life. However, after considering what I learned about psilocybin and its history, I decided to give it a try.

I will now elaborate on the details of my self-experimentation and self-study:

### **First experience:**

(Word "Prior" - meaning before the administered dose.)

**Prior physical condition:** Back pain and slight abdominal pain (pre-existing health condition includes diverticulitis and diverticulosis and degenerative disc disease).

**Prior mental conditions (including mindset):** Depression, Anxiety, and Stress.

**Environment/setting:** Home in the living room with close friends. Temp is approx. 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Aurora Borealis lights in the room. 70's music positive vibes.

**Dose:** Approx. 5 small Golden Teacher mushrooms.

### **Rise (Approx. 1 hr 20 mins after dose)**

Warm "fuzzy" tension in scalp and head. Anxiety, stress, and depression are replaced with curiosity, and curiosity changes to excitement. Physical functions such as walking and normal movements are normal.

### **Peak (Approx. 1 hr 45 mins)**

No back pain, "giggles", no negative mental thoughts, feeling of something deeper to reality. Challenging to focus. Time seems to move slower (time dilation). Physical functions such as walking and normal movements felt slightly weightless "floating" feeling.

### **Fall (Approx. 3 hrs)**

No back pain, focus is hazy, happy feeling, comforting feeling that everything will be alright. Physical functions such as walking and normal movements are normal.

### **After (Approx. 4 hrs 30 mins)**

Questioning what I experienced, questioning reality, feeling that everything will be alright remains, easy to focus, feeling spiritual.

## **Second Experience (approx. 3 weeks after first experience):**

**Prior physical condition:** Back pain and slight abdominal pain (pre-existing health condition includes diverticulitis and diverticulosis and degenerative disc disease).

**Prior mental conditions (including mindset):** Slight Depression, Stress.

**Environment/setting:** Home in bedroom, alone laying down in bed, early morning with daylight, Temp is approx. 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Aurora Borealis lights in the room. Meditation music with alternating tones with no voices and no musical instruments.

**Dose:** Approx. 7 medium Golden Teacher mushrooms, taken on empty stomach.

### **Rise**

Relaxing and slow breathing, open minded to whatever happens.

### **Peak**

Feeling of floating into the universe (not scared but relaxing feeling), no longer having a physical body, no physical pain, the feeling of letting go of all negative emotions and feelings, a feeling of “**Eutierria**” or “**Mystical Union**”. Spiritual connection with God and the universe.

### **Fall**

Feeling freedom from burdens, returning to self-awareness, and happiness. Standing and moving is normal. Vision appears slightly foggy due to natural light sensitivity. Described as a camera light fog due to indirect sunlight, or a smudged camera lens.

### **After**

Remaining feeling of being at peace and freedom of burdens, Vision normalizes, realization that most things in life are out of self-control.

Several more positive experiences after the previously mentioned. The feeling of being at peace, freedom from most burdens, and happiness, remain for months after the experiences. Back pain remains consistent but are relieved during the experiences and for a short time (from hours, up to 1 day) after the experiences.

**Overall impressions:**

Psilocybin has strong mental health benefits for both short-term and long-term treatments. The benefit effects are long-lasting and sometimes are not required again after a few treatments. The doses can be self-administered, but patient requires some guidance for the first couple of treatments so that the patient is aware of how to obtain the benefits. Otherwise, they may abuse the treatments by using them in improper environments (such as driving etc.) or by simply just as recreational use. "Guided" treatments should be recommended for people who are not experienced in this treatment. No addiction side effects from psilocybin treatment.

**SB0336\_MHAMD\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dan Martin

Position: FAV



1301 York Road, #505  
Lutherville, MD 21093  
phone 443.901.1550  
fax 443.901.0038  
www.mhamd.org

**Senate Bill 336 Task Force on Responsible Use of  
Natural Psychedelic Substances - Extension**

Finance Committee

February 11, 2026

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 336.

SB 336 extends the work of the Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances.

Psychedelic-assisted therapies hold enormous promise for treating some of the most intractable mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and alcohol use disorder. With studies at top research institutions like Johns Hopkins, New York University, and Imperial College London showing compelling results, psychedelic medicine is rapidly gaining broad public attention.

At the same time, the complexity of issues surrounding the equitable adoption of these treatments – in particular, around how to ensure successful adoption within the behavioral health field – is significant. Professional practice guidelines, training standards, and unified reimbursement strategies that will enable providers to receive equitable reimbursement from payers for delivering psychedelic-assisted therapy are all major policy areas that must be considered and defined.

The Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances is helping to determine how best to responsibly advance the use of psychedelic substances in a responsible, safe and data driven manner that ensures broad, equitable, and affordable access to these substances. MHAMD supports SB 336 to ensure a continuation of this important work.

*For more information, please contact Dan Martin at (410) 978-8865*

**SB0336 FAV - DJS4.pdf**

Uploaded by: David Selleh

Position: FAV

**SB0336 – FAVORABLE (FAV)**

David Jun Selleh, LCPC, LPC  
Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapist  
Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I support Senate Bill 0336, which would extend the Maryland Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances through 2027 and require an updated report in 2026.

My name is David Jun Selleh. I am a resident of Montgomery County, District 9A. I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, offering Psychedelic Integration and Harm Reduction services and Ketamine-Assisted Psychotherapy (KAP): an integrative approach to leveraging non-ordinary states of consciousness to treat mental health conditions. I also sit on the Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances, as one with expertise in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.

Natural psychedelic substances have been used for millenia in spiritual ceremonies. Despite present-day federal restriction and absence of FDA-approved options, clinical and public interest is surging. The FDA designated psilocybin a “breakthrough therapy.” The DoD is funding psychedelic research for military and veterans. Oregon, Colorado, and New Mexico have already enacted state-level regulated psychedelic access models, offering valuable lessons learned. Washington, D.C. decriminalized psychedelics, furthering a presently unmonitored market. The presidential administration has taken an assertive stance on advancing psychedelics, leaving Maryland with a time-limited opportunity to tailor local policies before federal standards are imposed.

In my professional counseling work, I have witnessed both irresponsible and responsible use of natural psychedelic substances, often driven by public interest in clinical findings, and ready access through Washington D.C. and other illicit channels. A regulated access program can maximize benefits while also mitigating risks for Marylanders already seeking these compounds.

The Task Force does not support delaying state action. As a pioneer in psychedelic science since the 1950s, Maryland is well-positioned to translate lessons from other states into a responsible resident-centered policy, leading national models rather than reacting to them. An extension will allow the Task Force to carefully craft a regulatory approach that ensures safe, responsible, and affordable access.

I urge the committee to vote favorably on Senate Bill 0336 and support the extended work of the Maryland Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances.

With Gratitude,



David Jun Selleh  
MA, NCC, LCPC, LPC  
9711 Washingtonian Blvd, Ste 550  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878-5789

Resources:

- Maryland Task Force On Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances:  
October 2025 Report:  
[https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MCA/Ch793,Ch792\(2024\)\\_2025\(10\).pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MCA/Ch793,Ch792(2024)_2025(10).pdf)
- Maryland Task Force On Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances:  
Research and General Information on Natural Psychedelic Substances,  
hosted by Maryland Cannabis Administration:  
[https://cannabis.maryland.gov/Pages/Research\\_and\\_General\\_Information.aspx](https://cannabis.maryland.gov/Pages/Research_and_General_Information.aspx)

**SB0336 2.7.26.pdf**

Uploaded by: David Yaden

Position: FAV

**David B. Yaden, PhD**  
Griffiths Professor in Psychedelic Research  
Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research  
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine  
5510 Nathan Shock Drive, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21224  
dyaden1@jhmi.edu



## **SB0336 – FAVORABLE**

**Bill Number:** SB0336

**Position:** FAV

**Name:** David B. Yaden, PhD

**Title:** Associate Professor; Griffiths Professor in Psychedelic Research

**Affiliation:** Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

**Address:** Baltimore, Maryland

### **Written Testimony**

I submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 0336, which would extend the Maryland Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances through 2027 and require an updated report in 2026.

I am a professor and research scientist in psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where my work currently focuses on psychedelic substances, including their potential therapeutic effects, benefits, risks, and other ethical considerations. I am also a co-founder of the Hub at Oxford for Psychedelic Ethics, an organization dedicated to advancing evidence-based and ethically grounded psychedelic research.

The Maryland Task Force has played an important role in ensuring that discussions surrounding psychedelic substances are informed by high-quality scientific evidence and bioethical scholarship. As interest in these substances grows, scientifically, clinically, publicly, and in policy contexts, it is increasingly important that these discussions are grounded in the scientific evidence rather than speculation or polarization.

The Task Force provides a way for emerging research, ethical considerations, and stakeholder perspectives to be synthesized and communicated to policymakers.

From my perspective, extending the Maryland Task Force is *not* about predetermining policy outcomes. Rather, it preserves Maryland's capacity to engage in informed, evidence-based deliberation as the relevant science and regulatory landscape continue to evolve.

From both a scientific and public-interest perspective, responsible policymaking in this area benefits from sustained attention to data, ethics, and lived experience. The Task Force supports these goals by creating a careful and transparent bridge between research and policy discussion.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0336 and to support the continued work of the Task Force.

Respectfully submitted,  
David B. Yaden, PhD  
February 7, 2026

**DOSEM\_SB0336\_FAV\_2.12.26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Davon Gardner

Position: FAV



---

*Governor Wes Moore*

*Lt. Governor Aruna Miller*

*Acting Secretary Walter L. Simmons*

---

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 336  
**Title:** Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances -  
Extension  
**Committee:** Finance Committee  
**Hearing Date:** February 12, 2026  
**Position:** Favorable

---

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 336. The Office of Social Equity (OSE) within the Department of Social and Economic Mobility (DoSEM) works to ensure that equity, public health, and community impact remain central to Maryland’s evolving substance policy framework, making the continued work of this Task Force particularly relevant to our mission.

Senate Bill 0336 extends the Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances through December 31, 2027, and requires an updated report to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31, 2026. This legislation reflects Maryland’s commitment to careful, evidence-based policymaking in emerging areas of substance use and public health.

The Task Force provides a structured forum for examining evolving research, public health considerations, and potential regulatory approaches related to natural psychedelic substances, while ensuring that discussions remain grounded in data, equity, and community impact. Extending the Task Force will allow its members to continue engaging experts, stakeholders, and impacted communities at a time when national research and policy conversations are rapidly developing, and will better equip policymakers with the information needed to guide future decisions.

For these reasons, DoSEM respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 336. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**SB 336\_FAV Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Selena Rawlley

Position: FAV



February 12, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**SB0336 – Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances – Extension**  
*FAVORABLE*

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Cannabis Administration (MCA), where I serve as the facilitator of the Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances, in SUPPORT of SB 336 – Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances – Extension.

As introduced, SB 336 extends the currently authorized Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances by one year, thereby extending the current membership on the Task Force for the Director of the MCA or their designee. MCA is prepared to continue its engagement in the Task Force’s activities as part of its regular course of business, utilizing existing resources.

MCA would further note that the Task Force has accomplished a substantial body of work within its allotted timeframe, including the completion and submission of a comprehensive report to the Maryland General Assembly in October 2025 entitled “*Maryland Natural Psychedelic Substance Access Program: A Pathway Forward.*” The Task Force has met regularly and operates efficiently – convening weekly in subcommittees and biweekly as a full body – demonstrating its unwavering commitment to its mandate. Contingent upon the passage of SB 336 as introduced, the Task Force has developed a clear and strategic plan to guide the remainder of its tenure. This extension will provide the Task Force with adequate time to continue refining its recommendations, engaging with critical stakeholders, and advancing the development of a safe, equitable, and accessible natural psychedelic program for the State of Maryland.

In my role facilitating the Task Force's work over the past year, I have observed a level of dedication, subject-matter expertise, and collaborative productivity that distinguishes this body from typical task force operations. I have never encountered a more dedicated, passionate, empathetic, and hardworking group of professionals. While the State often approaches task force extension legislation with caution, I can confidently assure the Committee that this Task Force has unequivocally demonstrated its value and effectiveness and is fully deserving of the proposed extension.

For these reasons, the Maryland Cannabis Administration supports Senate Bill 336 and respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report. Should the Committee have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [Selena.Rawlley@maryland.gov](mailto:Selena.Rawlley@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,  
Selena Raj Rawlley  
Deputy Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Maryland Cannabis Administration

# **SB0336 Written Testimony .pdf**

Uploaded by: Shanetha Lewis

Position: FAV

# Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 0336:

TO: Senator Pamela Beidle Chair, Finance Committee

FROM: Shanetha Lewis, Task Force on the Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances, Chair Regulations and Governance Committee

DATE: 02/05/2026

BILL: SB0336

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Shanetha Marable-Lewis and I am writing in strong support of SB0336, which extends the Task Force on the Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances. As a member of the Task Force and former chair of the Regulations and Governance Committee, I have been honored to be a part of and witness firsthand the critical importance of this work and the urgent need for additional time to complete our mission responsibly.

## **Maryland's Unique Position and Responsibility**

Maryland has been a pioneer in psychedelic science since the 1950s, with Johns Hopkins leading groundbreaking research that has shaped global understanding of these compounds. This history and tradition positions us to lead rather than follow. We are uniquely well-positioned to translate lessons learned from other states into a responsible, resident-centered, evidence based policy that leads national access models rather than simply reacting to or replicating them. The Task Force has already invested over 700 hours of expert volunteer time. We have done the hard work of building consensus, reviewing evidence, analyzing models, and developing a comprehensive framework. Now we need the time to develop regulation recommendations to help lay the foundation for our Pathway Forward plan.

## **The Landscape Is Rapidly Evolving**

As noted in our reports, the Task Force does not support delaying state action pending future federal approval. Due in part to the fact that despite federal restrictions and the absence of FDA-approved options, clinical and public interest in psychedelic-assisted therapy is surging nationwide:

- The FDA has designated psilocybin a "breakthrough therapy," acknowledging its exceptional therapeutic potential for treatment-resistant depression
- The Department of Defense is actively funding psychedelic research specifically for military service members and veterans
- Oregon, Colorado, and New Mexico have already enacted state-level regulated psychedelic access models, offering valuable lessons learned
- Washington, D.C. has decriminalized psychedelics, creating an unmonitored market that lacks consumer protections

## **Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 0336:**

- New Jersey just made history on January 20, 2026, when Governor Phil Murphy signed the Psilocybin Behavioral Health Access and Therapy Pilot Program into law, allocating \$6 million for psilocybin trials at three hospitals across the state with an 11-member advisory board to oversee implementation (PRWeb, January 2026)
- The current presidential administration has taken an assertive stance on advancing psychedelics, leaving Maryland with a time-limited opportunity to tailor local policies before federal standards are imposed

### **The Devastating Reality: Veteran Suicide Crisis**

Maryland is home to approximately 360,000 veterans and another 100,000 active duty service members. Approximately 7.6% of adults who live in Maryland are veterans. The majority of veterans are between the age of 35-54 and we are home to a more diverse veteran population than that of the national average.

According to the VA's 2025 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, 17.5 veterans die by suicide every single day in the United States, that's 6,398 veteran suicides in 2023 alone (VA News, February 2026). If you add in opioid related deaths this number more than doubles to 44 veterans a day. As a combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, I have lost too many brothers and sisters in arms to this **preventable** epidemic.

The most common risk factors identified among veterans who died by suicide were pain (53.8%), sleep problems (51.4%), and increased healthcare use (VA Annual Report, 2024). Among veterans with mental health diagnoses who died by suicide: 64% had depression, 43% had anxiety disorders, 40% had PTSD, and 32% had alcohol use disorder (RAND Corporation, May 2025).

### **The Human Cost of Inaction**

Through my work with both the Task Force and Veterans Initiative 22, I see daily the desperation of veterans seeking alternatives when conventional treatments fail. Currently, veterans are flying overseas with organizations like Heroic Hearts Project to access psychedelic-assisted therapy in countries like Mexico, Peru, and Costa Rica. While these organizations sponsor their veteran participants, other veterans who do not partake or qualify for these special programs are spending thousands of dollars and traveling thousands of miles, and each and everyone of them are taking significant personal and professional risks, all because they cannot access these potentially life-saving psychedelic treatments at home.

These warriors, who served our nation with honor, should not have to leave U.S. soil to access evidence-based mental health care.

### **Why an Extension Is Essential**

Crafting recommended regulations for the proposed Ensemble Model responsibly requires significant additional work in 2027. With the extension, our Task Force will work to:

## Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 0336:

- Carefully craft regulatory approaches that ensure safe, responsible, and affordable access
- Learn from early-adopter states like Oregon (which has identified important lessons about pricing, accessibility, and integration with existing healthcare), Colorado, New Mexico, and New Jersey, avoiding their pitfalls while incorporating their successes into our own pathway forward access models
- Center equity and accessibility in our framework, ensuring veterans, first responders, underserved communities, and those Marylander most in need can access these therapies
- Build robust safety protocols that protect vulnerable populations while maximizing therapeutic benefit
- Establish Maryland as a national leader in evidence-based psychedelic policy, building on our state's unparalleled legacy in psychedelics

Without the extension, this critical foundational work cannot be completed.

### **The Difference It Makes**

- Public safety incidents that undermine confidence in these therapies vs. demonstrated safety records that build trust
- Accessibility only for the affluent vs. equitable access for all Marylanders, especially veterans and underserved communities
- Regulatory chaos and market instability vs. clear frameworks that enable responsible business development
- Missing opportunities to help thousands of Marylanders vs. establishing Maryland as the gold standard for psychedelic policy

As someone who serves in academia, policy development, and veteran advocacy, I can attest that not extending this process would be a disservice to Maryland residents. The stakes are too high for the veterans who die by suicide every day in America and for the thousands of Marylanders with treatment-resistant depression, PTSD, chronic pain, and substance use disorders. These groups in particular, along with all Maryland citizens, deserve a system designed for their safety and success.

I respectfully urge you to support SB0336 and grant the Task Force the time necessary to fulfill its mandate and complete its mission responsibly.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Shanetha Marable-Lewis, MS

Task Force on the Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances, Chair Reg and Gov Committee

## Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 0336:

### Sources Referenced:

Maryland General Assembly, Committee Testimony on Senate Bill 615 (Maryland Veterans Suicide Prevention Day), March 7, 2024. Available at: [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte\\_testimony/2024/eee/22033\\_03072024\\_181347-240.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2024/eee/22033_03072024_181347-240.pdf)

Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs, "Annual Report 2025," November 17, 2025. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A&D%20Docs/CVA/Report/CVAAnnualReport2025.pdf>

Quantumrun Foresight, "Maryland Demographics (2025 Statistics)," August 23, 2025. Available at: <https://www.quantumrun.com/consulting/maryland-demographics/>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA releases 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report," VA News, December 19, 2024. Available at: <https://news.va.gov/137221/va-2024-suicide-prevention-annual-report/>

RAND Corporation, "The Rising Rate of Suicide Among Veterans (2025 Update)," May 22, 2025. Available at: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA1363-1-v2.html>

# **SB336\_EricSterling\_FWA**

Uploaded by: Eric Sterling

Position: FWA

STATEMENT OF  
**ERIC E. STERLING, J.D.<sup>1</sup>**  
SUBMITTED TO  
THE MARYLAND SENATE  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
SENATOR PAMELA BEIDLE, CHAIR  
SENATOR ANTONIO HAYES, VICE CHAIR  
FEBRUARY 11, 2026

**IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS OF  
SB 336**

Concerning

**Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances -- Extension**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Honorable Senators, thank you for scheduling this hearing on SB 336. I wholeheartedly support the enactment of SB 336 but respectfully suggest two small but important amendments to the definition of natural psychedelic substances that I discuss below.

I commend Senator Brian Feldman and Delegate Pam Guzzone for their outstanding leadership in support of this legislation and the Task Force.

Governor Wes Moore and his team did an outstanding job in selecting their appointees to the Task Force. I have served on countless boards, councils, commissions, and committees at the federal, state, local and non-profit level for over fifty years. The Governor's appointees to the Task Force are among the most conscientious, organized and hard-working of any group that I have had the honor to work with. **It must be stressed that the members of the Task Force are volunteers and receive no compensation for their service.** I am grateful to the Governor for appointing me to serve.

The chair of the Task Force who the Governor selected, Dr. Andrew Coop, has been an extraordinarily capable leader. He is scrupulous to maximize the transparency and accessibility of the Task Force's work to the public. Dr. Coop has selected and empowered excellent committee chairs and encouraged everyone to produce their best work. His encouragement has inspired all of us to bring as much of our positive energy as we can to this effort and to produce two substantial reports in a very short time. In addition, we are very fortunate to have had excellent support from the staff of the Medical Cannabis Administration.

Last fall, the Task Force recommended that the State enact a comprehensive program to license the controlled production, distribution and administration of psilocybin. Our approach is for a phased development of a program to make materials with a high margin of safety available under legal control. Our report noted the legal and policy challenges that need to be addressed. Our report did not address the details of the regulatory structure. This is a job that the all-volunteer Task Force is eager to undertake for Maryland. Developing a new program like this will require continued expert consultation – a job the task force is well-prepared to undertake. If the General Assembly enacts a program in 2027, the experience of patients, practitioners, producers and

dispensers will be important to refine the initial program. The Task Force would be well positioned to gather and analyze that experience. Thus, this bill makes a great deal of sense by extending the life of the Task Force to the end of 2027 and directing it to further study the issues and prepare a report later this year.

### SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

**Peyote:** I suggest that the exclusion of peyote from the defined term, “natural psychedelic substances” be deleted. On page 1, delete line 18 and delete in line 15, “(1)”.

Peyote is a paradigm natural psychedelic substance. It has been used continuously in religious practice for at least one thousand years in the Western Hemisphere. The use of peyote by Native Americans in their worship was specifically protected by Congress in the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments of 1994, notwithstanding that peyote is a Schedule I controlled dangerous substance under Federal and most state laws. (P.L. 103-344, Oct 6, 1994, 108 Stat. 3125, (42 U.S.C. 1996a)). I was involved in supporting that legislation.

**A key issue with peyote is that traditional peyote growth sites are being devastated by poachers to obtain peyote for use by persons outside the religious groups whose use is protected by law.** I presume that the intention of the sponsors of the 2024 legislation by excluding peyote from the term “natural psychedelic substances” was to prevent the Task Force from recommending any policies that would further endanger the traditional sources of sacramental peyote. I wholly support that objective. *But the Task Force should be trusted to be sensitive to this issue. The exclusion of peyote could be counter productive. The exclusion could be interpreted as a bar to the Task Force to recommend penalties under Maryland law for any distribution of peyote that was plundered from the traditional sites of peyote growth or that interferes with the use of peyote for legally protected worship.*

**Naturally derived:** On page 1, lines 15 and 16, substitute “naturally occurring” for “naturally derived.”

In this legislation, to define "natural psychedelic substances" as “naturally derived” is a subtle but important mistake. **What the bill intends to cover are “naturally occurring” compounds** – i.e. compounds that occur in nature and are found in various plants or fungi.

Adopting this amendment is critically important if you want to protect peyote but eventually allow the use of mescaline in medicine. The current definition plainly excludes any laboratory synthesis of these compounds in a pure form. **Permitting the laboratory synthesis of mescaline is the ONLY WAY to protect peyote, if there is going to be any medical use of mescaline.** Furthermore, any product of *a process* that chemically or mechanically *derives* (i.e., extracts) a natural psychedelic substance from the plant or fungi is not a "natural derivation," it is a *laboratory process*. The definition excludes laboratory-extracted compounds which are going to be the primary sources of the chemical compounds identified as natural psychedelic substances.

To derive something is to obtain it from a source. Literally, "naturally derived" means that when an organism ingests a plant or fungi containing the naturally occurring compound, the digestive system of the organism "derives" the compound and introduces it to the bloodstream -- naturally.

Almost any other way that the compounds are “derived” from their sources are on their face, not natural. Plainly, this is not what the General Assembly intends!

I urge a favorable report of SB 336 with these two little but significant amendments.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eric E. Sterling has lived in Maryland 34 years and in the 18<sup>th</sup> legislative district over 27 years. He recently has served on the Advisory Commission on Policing of Montgomery County (2020-2024, Chair 2022-2024). In 2013, he was appointed by Governor Martin O’Malley to a four-year term on the Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission where, as chair of the Policy Committee, he was a principal author in 2015 of the regulations creating the medical cannabis industry in Maryland. He was Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Policy Foundation (1989-2020). From 1979 to 1989 he was Assistant Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, responsible for drug abuse matters among many other issues. In Montgomery County, he also served for 10 years on the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council including three years as chair. He graduated from Haverford College with a B.A. in Religion in 1973 and received a J.D. from Villanova University Law School in 1976.

In 1990, he was a key adviser of Reuben Snake and the Native American Religious Freedom Project that helped enact the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments of 1994, P.L.103-344 (Oct. 6, 1994). He organized peyote worship in Greenbelt Park under the auspices of the U.S. National Park Service and the Native American Church of North America, September 29-30, 1990. He participated in the Pacific Symposia on Psychedelic Drugs at the Esalen Institute (which led to his cameo appearance in the motion picture about psilocybin mushrooms, *Fantastic Fungi* (2019), streaming on *Netflix*). He is the author of “Law Enforcement Against Entheogens: Is it Religious Persecution?” in Robert Forte (ed.), *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*, Council on Spiritual Practices, San Francisco, 1997.