

Senate Bill 709 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Alternative Therapies Fund – Establishment (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day))

Budget and Taxation Committee

March 2, 2022

Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

The 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 709 with a friendly amendment.

SB 709 establishes a new fund to support the Maryland Department of Health in studying the effectiveness of and improving access to alternative therapies for post-traumatic stress disorders in veterans. “Alternative therapies” is defined in the bill as including psychedelics, including MDMA, psilocybin, and ketamine.

In 2015, MHAMD launched [BrainFutures](#), a national nonprofit dedicated to improving human outcomes by assessing and advancing practical applications of new scientific understanding of the brain. BrainFutures bring together diverse stakeholders, policymakers, funders, innovators and influencers to accelerate national adoption of effective practices for both brain health optimization and the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders. Our recent [Neurofeedback Report](#) validated the effectiveness of neurofeedback for the treatment of ADHD and anxiety disorders, and our [Youth Brain Fitness Report](#) explained why executive function (EF) skills are central to school success, and identified 11 classroom-based EF programs in use in schools across the country that are measurably increasing student academic outcomes.

In early 2021, BrainFutures launched an 18-month psychedelic-assisted therapy initiative to educate policymakers, health care providers, payers and the public about the clinical applications and benefits of psychedelic substances, particularly as relates to mental health issues like post-traumatic stress disorder and treatment-resistant depression. The organization is releasing a series of issue briefs over the next several months and building multi-stakeholder collaborations to prepare for widescale adoption of these treatments and lay a foundation for the regulatory and reimbursement work ahead.

BrainFutures and its cross-disciplinary advisory board of leading experts can provide a wealth of information in the field of psychedelic-assisted therapy that could prove useful in determining how best to responsibly advance these alternative therapies. **Accordingly, we request an amendment to SB 709 to add BrainFutures to the list of organizations the Department of Health shall consult in performing its duties under the bill (pg. 3, lines 15-23).**

SB 709 is an important step in expanding promising new therapies for treating some of the most intractable mental health issues. For this reason, **upon adoption of the amendment outlined above**, MHAMD supports this bill and urges a favorable report.

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