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ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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Date: March 10, 2026

Re: MD HB 1477 - Veterans Mental Health Innovations Act

Position: SUPPORT

To: The Maryland Senate Finance Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Dylan Hager and as a U.S. Veteran, I am testifying today on behalf of Law Enforcement Action Partnership, or LEAP, in support of House Bill 1477, the Veterans Mental Health Innovations Act. This legislation would allow research institutions in Maryland to participate in FDA regulated clinical research into ibogaine as a potential treatment for veterans living with serious, treatment resistant conditions.

LEAP is an international nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience serving in the justice system. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety, addressing the root causes of crime, and working toward healing police-community relations.

I previously served for over a decade with the Colorado Department of Corrections, rising from Correctional Officer to Major. During my time in prisons, I saw firsthand the consequences of untreated trauma, post traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and substance use disorders. These conditions do not stay contained within individuals, they ripple out and affect families, communities, and institutions, including the disproportionate number of veterans we housed who struggled with these same issues.

This mental health crisis is especially acute among veterans. [According to data from the Department of Veterans Affairs, approximately 17 veterans die by suicide each day.](#) Many others live with treatment resistant PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and addiction that have not responded to existing therapies.

LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org

Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

As a corrections leader, I learned that maintaining the status quo in the face of clear suffering is not neutral. When traditional approaches are not enough, we have a responsibility to examine credible alternatives through structured and accountable processes. I speak from direct experience and have witnessed how a carefully administered option like ibogaine can offer a path to recovery where others could not.

House Bill 1477 does not shortcut science, but rather engages it. It creates a structured, FDA-regulated pathway to rigorously evaluate ibogaine, a naturally derived treatment that [benefits individuals facing severe, treatment resistant conditions, according to early research](#). If there is sound evidence that an intervention could reduce suicide risk, addiction, and long term instability among veterans, then careful clinical evaluation is a responsible and measured step.

As someone who spent years responsible for institutional safety and offender care, I believe participating in disciplined, science-driven research aligns with both public safety and sound governance.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Major Dylan Hager (Ret.)
Colorado Department of Corrections
Speaker, Law Enforcement Action Partnership