



# Psilocybin-assisted therapy offers **hope and healing**

Maine is confronting epidemic levels of mental illness. Daily medications, therapy, and other coping mechanisms help some people get by — but for many, these tools aren't working. Promising research from America's top universities have found that psychedelic therapies can help in treatment-resistant anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

Psychedelic therapy with psilocybin shows so much promise that **the FDA recently granted it a “breakthrough therapy” designation for depression**, meaning that it may demonstrate substantial improvement over what's currently available.

Senator Donna Bailey's Psilocybin Health Access Act (LD 1914) would establish a tightly regulated program to make psilocybin treatment services available for veterans, first responders, and others in need through licensed and trained facilitators. The legislation is modeled on policies approved by voters in Oregon and Colorado.



Voters in Oregon approved a 2020 ballot initiative to establish healing centers for psilocybin therapy now opening in 2023.



In 2022, voters in Colorado approved a similar measure to allow psychedelic-assisted therapy.



Over 25 states have introduced or enacted legislation related to psychedelic medicines since 2019

# The Maine Psilocybin Health Access Act

## LD 1914

**The Maine Psilocybin Health Access Act**, sponsored by Senators Donna Bailey (D), Daniel Ankeles (D), David Boyer (R), Eric Brakey (R), Stacy Brenner (D), Marc Malon (D), Austin Theriault (R), envisions a system of safe access to psilocybin therapy services provided by licensed and trained facilitators. The policy is modeled on Oregon's strictly regulated program, which was approved by voters in 2020.

### **What the bill does:**

- Establishes regulated access to psilocybin therapy for adults who qualify under the supervision of a licensed, trained facilitator;
- Directs the Department of Health and Human Services, with recommendations from an advisory board, to develop strict safety criteria to minimize risk and maximize benefit for those in need;
- Requires facilitators and clients to conduct a preparation session and risk assessment screening prior to administering psilocybin;
- Authorizes the Department to prohibit all advertising related to psilocybin services; and
- Provides state regulators a 12-month timeline to develop rules and procedures to ensure responsible implementation.

### **What the bill does not do:**

- The bill does not allow the retail sale of psilocybin; and
- The bill does not allow access to people under 21 years of age.

# Psychedelic-assisted therapy **in the news**

## **The New York Times**

### **"Legal Use of Hallucinogenic Mushrooms Begins in Oregon"**

**Jan. 3, 2023**

On Jan. 1, Oregon became the first state in the nation to legalize the adult use of psilocybin, a naturally occurring psychedelic that has shown significant promise for treating severe depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and end-of-life anxiety among the terminally ill, among other mental health conditions.

Although scientists are still working to understand their therapeutic dynamics, psilocybin and other psychedelics are thought to promote neuroplasticity, a rewiring of the brain that gives patients fresh perspectives on longstanding psychiatric problems.

One recent study on alcohol-use disorder, for example, found that two doses of psilocybin paired with talk therapy led to an 83 percent decline in heavy drinking among participants, and that nearly half of them had stopped drinking entirely by the end of the eight-month trial.

## **DAILY BEAST**

### **"Why Veterans Are Lining Up for Legalized Magic Mushrooms"**

**Dec. 30, 2022**

The Heroic Hearts Program currently offers ayahuasca retreats in Mexico and Peru to veterans with a history of military combat and/or sexual assault. Founder Jesse Gould said he hopes to set up an outpost in Oregon within the next year. An Army veteran who credits ayahuasca for helping him heal from PTSD, Gould envisions a pilot program where veterans are treated with magic mushrooms in a group therapy setting led by veterans who've done their own healing through psychedelics.

"We're trying to create this self-supporting ecosystem to keep costs down, make it scalable and take the burden off of therapists," Gould said. "The veterans can help support their brothers and sisters who they relate to. It's training communities to heal themselves."

# Psychedelic-assisted therapy **in the news**

THE  
NEW YORKER

## "Can Psychedelics Heal Ukrainians' Trauma?"

February 27, 2023

A psychedelic solution has already been under discussion in Ukraine. After the panel convened, Yuriy Blokhin, who moved from Kyiv to Canada and who runs the North American branch of the Ukrainian Psychedelic Research Association, was reached by phone.

"Ayahuasca saved my life after an episode of depression," he said. "Then I met an Army Ranger, and we started using it to help special-ops veterans. We want to make sure that when the war in Ukraine ends there are world-class options. And it can become an additional stream of revenue for Ukraine." He added that there was "a critical mass of open-mindedness in Ukraine" and mentioned "the government's dynamic startup culture." Blokhin wants to train therapists who will treat Ukrainian refugees in the use of psychedelics.



## "How psilocybin may rewire the brain to ease depression, anxiety and more"

June 11, 2022

"The data are strong from depression to PTSD to cluster headaches, which is one of the most painful conditions I'm aware of," said neurologist Richard Isaacson, director of the Alzheimer's Prevention Clinic in the Center for Brain Health at Florida Atlantic University.

"I'm excited about the future of psychedelics because of the relatively good safety profile and because these agents can now be studied in rigorous double-blinded clinical trials," Isaacson said. "Then we can move from anecdotal reports of 'I tripped on this and felt better' to 'Try this and you will be statistically, significantly better.'"

# Psilocybin-assisted therapy **research**

Pioneering studies at leading medical research institutions such as Johns Hopkins, NYU, Imperial College of London, and the University of Alabama show that psilocybin-assisted therapy can be effective in treating depression, trauma, end-of-life anxiety, addiction, and other conditions. A number of studies are currently underway throughout across the country and around the world.

## **Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine**

**Major depressive disorder:** Research published in 2022 involved administration of psilocybin to patients with major depression. After a 12-month assessment, 75% of participants showed a significant positive response to the treatment, and 58% were in remission. The authors concluded, "These findings demonstrate that the substantial antidepressant effects of psilocybin-assisted therapy may be durable at least through 12 months."

**Cigarette smoking cessation:** A follow up on a previous study involving 15 heavy smokers who wanted to quit found that two-thirds of the participants remained abstinent 12 months following psilocybin-assisted therapy.

**End of life anxiety:** Research involving psilocybin-assisted therapy for cancer patients was published in 2016. Over 80% of the study's participants reported moderate to greatly increased well-being and life satisfaction.

## **Imperial College of London**

**Major depressive disorder:** A double-blind, randomized, controlled trial involving 59 patients with major depressive disorder compared psilocybin with escitalopram (Lexapro), an SSRI. The results indicated that psilocybin was more effective than escitalopram (though the difference was not statistically significant due to small sample size) while producing better secondary outcomes for patients.

## **New York University Center for Psychedelic Medicine**

***Depression and anxiety among cancer patients:*** A pool of 29 patients with cancer-related anxiety and depression were randomly assigned a psilocybin treatment. At the 6.5-month follow-up, approximately 60–80% continued to show clinically significant reductions in depression or anxiety. Researchers concluded, “In conjunction with psychotherapy, single moderate-dose psilocybin produced rapid, robust and enduring anxiolytic and antidepressant effects in patients with cancer-related psychological distress.”

***Alcohol use disorder:*** Building on encouraging research originally published in 2015, Dr. Michael Bogenschutz, MD published a 2022 study that found participants given psilocybin-assisted therapy reduced heavy drinking by 83%.

## **Yale University**

***Major depressive disorder:*** Recent research led by Dr. Jordan Slosower and a team of psychiatrists at Yale explores the therapeutic benefits of psilocybin therapy for major depression.

***Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD):*** Dr. Benjamin Kelmendi is conducting clinical trials to understand the benefits of psilocybin-assisted therapy for patients with OCD.

***Headache disorders:*** Dr. Emmanuelle Schindler is conducting research into the effects of psilocybin for the treatment of cluster headaches, a severely painful condition that affects over 200,000 people in the US.

## **University of Alabama**

***Alleviation of psychological stress:*** Dr. Peter Hendricks’ work indicates that the use of psychedelics is strongly associated with reduced psychological distress and suicidal thinking.

***Protective effect against antisocial behavior:*** In another study, Dr. Hendricks measured the relationship between criminal behavior and the use of psychedelics. His study found use of psychedelics like psilocybin predicted a 27% decrease in the odds of committing theft, a 12% reduction in the odds of committing assault, a 22% decrease in the odds of arrest for a property crime, and an 18% decrease in the odds of arrest for a violent crime.