

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5396

**Title:** AN ACT INCREASING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH MEDICATION.

**Vote Date:** 3/18/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/14/2022

**File No.:** 237

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Public Health Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To address mental health issues impacting residents of our state, this bill will create, within the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), a Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Pilot Program to provide funding for qualified patients to receive MDMA or psilocybin-assisted therapy through the FDA-approved expanded access program. This pilot program will end once MDMA and psilocybin are approved by the federal DEA for medical use. The bill establishes a Patients for Approved Treatment Sites Fund (PAT), also within DMHAS, which will provide qualified applicants with grants to provide the therapies. The bill outlines the administrative guidelines for this process and requires that DMHAS select up to three applicants as approved treatment sites by 12/28/2022.

The bill establishes a Connecticut Psychedelic Treatment Advisory Board within DHMAS to advise the department on the regulations and infrastructure needed to safely allow access to these therapies and, in addition, requires the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) to adopt the DEA's controlled substances schedule for MDMA or psilocybin, should it be updated. Finally, the bill appropriates \$3 million to DMHAS to fund PAT.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner, Department of Menatal Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS):**

**Manisha Juthani, Commissioner, Department of Public Health (DPH):**

**Michelle Seagull Commissioner, Department of Consumer Protection, (DCP):**

At the direction of the state legislature, DMHAS convened a working group to study the efficacy of psilocybin as a therapeutic treatment and found it to be promising for several behavioral health conditions, particularly when safely administered in highly structured settings, and recommended the development of an expanded access program. It is the view of these agencies that this bill is much more expansive than the findings of their working group. They do not have the resources to implement some of the provisions of these programs. Expanded access programs can be available through a qualified research process without state agency intervention making this legislation unnecessary.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

##### **Dr. Sa'ed Al-Olimat, Board of Directors, Psychedelic Pharmacists Association:**

Our current antidepressant medication is not having the impact that we need. It may take weeks to show any benefit and can have harmful side effects. Psilocin, the compound that the body absorbs from psilocybin, is what induces the psychedelic experience, leading the user to experience deep psychological insights. The outcomes from leading research institutions find that one or two doses of psilocybin, with psychological support, may provide 6-12 months of relief both depression and anxiety. These compounds are physiologically safe with no record of overdose to date.

##### **Dr. Lynnette A. Averill, Baylor College of Medicine:**

Mounting evidence suggests that therapeutics like MDMA and psilocybin are fast-acting and promote rapid structural and functional neural plasticity having the potential to provide robust improvements. Research, being conducted at premier academic institutions in the US and across the world suggests psychedelic medicines work more rapidly than traditionally available treatments, targeting the full spectrum of symptoms and many associated factors.

##### **BG Stephen N. Xenakis, M.D., Director, Community Resilience Campaign:**

This legislation provides the tools to improve the treatments and delivery of mental health care. Creating a pilot program to fund clinical services through an FDA approved expanded access protocol enables real world patients, with complexities that may prevent access to clinical trials, to receive treatment they urgently need. Without these proactive measures, it will take many years after FDA approval to develop best practices and widely deploy better treatments.

##### **Jordan Slosower, MD, Yale University School of Medicine:**

This bill sets provides a very reasonable step towards increasing access to psychedelic medications within an FDA-approved clinical context, while also helping to prepare Connecticut for the likely possibility that these drugs will receive FDA approval within the next five years. Creating an Expanded Access pilot program and funding appropriate treatment sites will help develop the clinical infrastructure in the state needed to deliver these unique treatments and ensure access to more patients for whom conventional treatments are not effective.

##### **Brett Waters, Executive Director, Reason for Hope:**

Psychedelic-assisted therapy is a unique, time-intensive form of treatment that does not fit neatly into our current mental health care system and will create significant logistical challenges for transitioning from the research lab to real-world clinical settings. This bill is

prudent and sound policy informing best clinical practices while providing for the development of the regulatory infrastructure needed to ensure safe, responsible use of this type of therapy.

**Thomas Burr, Community and Affiliates Relations Manager, NAMI Connecticut:**

For too long Connecticut has seemingly been stuck with the standard treatment methods for mental health conditions, with correspondingly lackluster results. We feel that it is far past time to study different, perhaps even unorthodox treatments, that show great promise.

**Marcus Capone, Chairman, Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions:**

With the proper setting and under medical supervision, these therapies will save Veteran lives. Twenty-two veteran suicides per day is unacceptable; no one needs or deserves these interventions more than our nation's Veterans. The research supports that these therapies are more effective than any conventional treatment currently available.

**Allison Wilson, Founder, The Hope Project:**

My MDMA and psilocybin experience saved my life, my marriage, and ultimately, my children's lives. It gave me the hope, love, and compassion I needed to dig deep into myself after years of secondary PTSD from being at home for 16 years while my husband was on active duty.

**Additional Sources of Support**

- Ali Amirhooshmand, Apollo Pact
- Jon Kostakopoulos, Apollo Pact
- Jesse Gould, Executive Director, Heroic Hearts Project
- Susan Ousterman, Vilomah Memorial Foundation
- Zachary Green, UConn Hartford Chapter President, SSDP
- Margaret Watt, Policy Chair, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Connecticut Chapter
- LG Martin Steele, CEO, Reason for Hope
- Lt Col John L. Buchanan, Reason for Hope
- Jesse MacLachlan, Reason for Hope
- Amber Capone, Executive Director, Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions
- Dr. Robert Koffman
- Dr. Cynthia Levy
- Lt. Sarko Gergerian
- Jonathan Perez-Reyzin
- Scott Vail
- Serena Wu

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

No sources of opposition were provided.

**Reported by: Dallas Emerle**

**Date: 4/4/2022**