

Vanessa Shields-Haas

Regarding Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee LD 1914 An Act to Enact the Maine Psilocybin Health Access Act

15 May 2023

My name is Vanessa Shields-Haas, of Rockland, and I am writing in support of LD 1914, An Act to Enact the Maine Psilocybin Health Access Act. I am testifying as the daughter of David Shields, of Nobleboro, who lives with debilitating cluster headaches that could be ameliorated using medical psilocybin.

As a Family Nurse Practitioner, I know that providers must assess patients presenting with cluster headaches for suicidality because of the excruciating pain they cause. They are chronic, little is understood about why they occur, treatment options are limited, and there is no cure. In Europe, psilocybin is used medically to treat people living with cluster headaches. My father is 76, he has utilized every therapy available via a prescription with little relief.

While some people get months of remission in between cluster headache cycles, my Dad gets almost no relief. His cluster headache cycles can last weeks, with what are medically considered to be the most painful headaches, day after day. Their frequency and severity have only increased with time. He has been encouraged by his neurologist to travel out of state to obtain medical psilocybin for relief.

My Dad has always been an optimistic, positive force. During a recent cluster headache cycle, my Dad told me he did not want to live anymore if this is what living feels like. This is when I looked up whether Maine had any movement on medical psilocybin and contacted the Office of Senator Donna Bailey in support of her bill.

My Dad deserves to spend the last years of his life enjoying his grandchildren, hiking with my Mom, and sailing Penobscot Bay. You hold the power for him to live in less pain. Please legalize medical psilocybin for the sake of the many people like my Dad who would benefit greatly from it.

Thank you to the Committee of Veterans and Legal Affairs for hearing this testimony. Thank you to Senator Bailey for your leadership on this important issue and to your cosponsors: Representative Theriault, Senators Brakey and Brenner, and Representatives Ankeles, Boyer, and Malon.