

Testimony of BJ McCollister on behalf of New Approach in Support of LD 1914, *An Act To Enact the Maine Psilocybin Health Access Act.*

May 15, 2023

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is BJ McCollister and I am the President of The Resurgam Group. Today I am testifying before you today in support of LD1914 on behalf of my client, New Approach.

Academic research from Johns Hopkins University and many other universities across the U.S. has shown that psilocybin can be effective in treating depression, anxiety, and trauma. Thanks to the promise of these studies, psilocybin has been granted a "breakthrough" treatment status by the FDA - a status reserved for when research demonstrates a new treatment method is more effective than the current standards of care. In 2020, a \$26.9 million grant was awarded to the University of North Carolina from the U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency to research psilocybin with an aim to "effectively and rapidly treat depression, anxiety, and substance abuse without major side effects."

Considering these ongoing clinical trials and research, a categorization by the FDA as a "breakthrough" treatment, and the use of psilocybin by many communities for their healing properties, passing LD1914 is more timely than ever. This bill will ensure that those most in need of treatment, including veterans, victims with PTSD, and those who need end of life care will have access to life-changing therapies. It's why places like Colorado, Oregon, Texas, and a growing number of states and municipalities on all ends of the political spectrum have advanced legislation to create a pathway for psilocybin treatment for their residents.

It's no secret, we are in the midst of a mental health crisis in which many of those suffering from mental health traumas have been unsuccessful in treating their conditions with traditional therapies, this is especially true of our veteran's communities that have been suffering with few treatment options available. Allowing the use of these medicines with strict guardrails will allow those most in need to access these treatments.

Federal law currently prohibits psilocybin, but states can establish programs for therapeutic access and protect patients from arrest and criminal penalties. Under a therapeutic "right to try" model, patients diagnosed with severe mental health conditions can access psilocybin therapy through a trained facilitator. Responsible regulations are established to ensure patients' safety and prevent diversion.

This bill will provide real mental health relief throughout the state, in a regulated, supervised, therapeutic format.

This bill will NOT allow for any retail sales of psilocybin. Psilocybin cannot be taken home. Clients of psilocybin therapy cannot leave a healing center while under the influence.

Because psilocybin is a Schedule I drug, there are often comparisons to cannabis. The two approaches to regulation could not be more different, and the use of these drugs could not be more different. Psilocybin would be used and sold in regulated, supervised therapeutic settings. Never for retail or take home sale. Clients using psilocybin therapy experience treatment once or twice a year, not daily, weekly or monthly.

In closing, former Texas Governor Rick Perry put it best, that "these compounds are different than no other compound that we would have in our arsenal. If you will use it properly, it can save lives."

LD1914 would create a proper use program to save lives in Maine, and we ask for your support.