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**Sponsor Testimony Introducing and Supporting
LD 1582: An Act To Enact the Maine Psilocybin Services Act**

Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

I am Senator Donna Bailey of Senate District 31, proudly representing Hollis, Limington, Old Orchard Beach, Saco, and part of Buxton. Today I am excited to introduce my bill, LD 1582, “An Act To Enact the Maine Psilocybin Services Act,” which has been carried over from the last session.

In Maine, we take great pride in leading the nation on important issues and innovations, and I believe that we should add psilocybin therapy to that list. The history of psilocybin is fascinating and groundbreaking: Since 2014, the John Hopkins Center for Psychedelic Research and Psilocybin Therapy has discovered that psilocybin helps longtime smokers quit smoking, ease anxiety in patients who have life-threatening cancers, and reduce alcohol intake for those who struggle with substance abuse.¹ We know that some people need help kicking the hazardous habits that harm their health and additional support to improve their mental health, especially depression, which can be debilitating and severe. The data behind psilocybin therapy, some of which this Committee learned about last month when Dr. Lynnette Averill briefed the Committee on the proven potential of psilocybin, is compelling.

Of particular interest, too, is the power of psilocybin therapy to help treat people who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which includes survivors who suffered from domestic, physical, or sexual abuse and veterans who served in counterinsurgency campaigns overseas. In Maine, a domestic violence assault is reported every 2 minutes and 22 seconds.² Maine also has the fifth highest percentage of veterans in the United States, with nearly 10 percent of the adult population identifying as a veteran.³ According to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Maine veterans had a higher rate of suicide when compared to the suicide rate of the entire Northeastern region, as well as when compared to the general population in Maine and, once again, the whole Northeast.⁴ These alarming numbers for domestic violence survivors and veterans should urge us to explore all the ways that we can take care of, and treat, those who

¹ For reference, please see: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/psychiatry/research/psychedelics-research.html>

² For reference, please see: <https://www.mcedv.org/learn-about-abuse/statistics/>

³ For reference, please see: https://www.thecentersquare.com/maine/maine-veterans-make-up-9-7-of-state-s-population-study-finds/article_e1da8ec4-e816-11ea-b911-078ca19e6eba.html

⁴ For reference, please see: <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2019/2019-State-Data-Sheet-Maine-58.pdf>

are healing from the emotional and physical scars of abuse or violence and our brave veterans who leave the physical battlefields and IEDs behind only to return home and wage another war – an internal one that hurts their families, homes, and communities.

Now that I've shown the need for finding therapies and treatments, such as psilocybin therapy, that can help people recover from mental health ailments, PTSD, and substance abuse, I want to share some of the benefits of psilocybin from a medicinal point of view. First of all, the standard treatment for PTSD and severe mental disorders are selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). However, with SSRIs, which must be taken daily, only about 30 percent of people being treated for major depressive disorder respond well. Moreover, SSRIs are slow-acting antidepressants that take weeks, even months, for patients to see improvement. For people who have thoughts of self-harm or suicidal ideation, that could be too long. SSRIs also have side effects, like cognitive dysfunction and weight gain or loss, which can throw a patient further off balance.

On the other hand, psilocybin therapy works rapidly and robustly – within hours or days. That's immediate, quick relief. Psilocybin therapy also targets a broader spectrum of symptoms, unlike SSRIs. Finally, psilocybin is so effective and powerful that it's usually administered in single, double, or triple doses that provide relief for weeks and months at a time. These benefits are convincing enough that psilocybin therapy has been designated a breakthrough treatment for drug-resistant depression. As a result, psilocybin therapy is in Phase III Trials with the FDA, with anticipated FDA approval in 2025.

Testifying after me, you'll hear some stories from people whose lives have literally been changed by psilocybin therapy – and for the better. I hope that you keep an open mind and listen closely. I thank the Committee for its time, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.