

Dear Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Amy Bolton, I am a resident of Stonington, Maine and I support the passing of the Maine Psilocybin Services Act.

Growing up, I was a happy kid; eager to read, learn, and explore. Around age thirteen, my thoughts began to carry a weight that became increasingly negative. My academic success quickly deteriorated as my depression grew, but I pushed through and post high school went off to Berklee College. However, after one semester I was forced to withdraw due to the debilitating nature of my depression. This was just the beginning of what turned into a 10+ year health issue. During those years, I tried various in/outpatient programs, some of which only led to a decline in my health due to the unstructured nature of many mental health facilities available to those unable to afford extortionate private care costs. I tried over fifteen different medications with no relief, a process that is exhausting due to the lengthy nature of how one must start/stop SSRI's (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) and affiliated medications, which are medications typically prescribed to those experiencing depression. I had what is referred to as "treatment-resistant depression", so I was then given the option to undergo ECT (electro convulsive therapy), an invasive treatment usually offered as a last resort. ECT did not help me. In between all these treatments, I also participated in various talk therapies, both individually and in group settings, as well as engaging in known mood boosting activities such as exercise, a healthy diet, and exposure to sunlight. People suffering with a variety of mental illnesses are often regarded as "not trying" and fall prey to others' lack of understanding or knowledge of their ailment. I believe I tried and exhausted all the resources that were available to me within the current healthcare system in attempts to lead a healthy and happy life.

In 2020, I had my first psilocybin mushroom experience after educating myself using literature currently available on the subject. A 2020 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found **one in two** patients put major depression in remission after only two psilocybin therapy sessions - which is **four times** more effective than conventional medication (such as SSRI's).^[1] **The psychedelic experience changed my life dramatically. I experienced more relief from those six hours – instantaneously – than I had in more than a decade of treatment, medication, and therapy.** Beyond healing, I felt full of hope, excitement, ideas, and for the first time, I actually had the energy to do something with them. Many healthy changes in my life have followed since that experience, and time has only shown lasting, positive effects. Mindful use paired with integration in the form of talk therapy has been a recipe for success in my life. The psilocybin mushroom experience has given me so much and it is with my deepest gratitude that I hope this experience may be as accessible as possible for those who want or need it. However, the utility of psilocybin doesn't stop with depression. These compounds have historically been shown – through scientific, evidence-based research – to be incredibly effective in treating several other health issues.

Take, for example, the opioid crisis we are currently experiencing in Maine and other parts of the country. Psilocybin provides us with a tool with which to combat it. In 2020 alone, there were **336** opioid related deaths in Maine. ^[2] A 2017 study by researchers at Johns Hopkins Medical found that in the 44,000 Americans participating, **psychedelic use was associated with a 40% reduced risk of opioid abuse.** ^[3] Designated a "breakthrough therapy" by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), psilocybin mushrooms are profoundly effective in treating other ailments such as anxiety, eating disorders, cluster

headaches, addictions of all sorts, and more. On average, **2,400 Mainers** die from smoking-related illnesses each year. [4] A 2017 study by Johns Hopkins faculty found that smoking patients achieved an **80% abstinence rate** over six months after psilocybin therapy - a **45% higher success rate** than the most effective FDA-approved smoking cessation drug. [5]

I urge you to vote in favor of the Maine Psilocybin Services Act so our neighbors, friends, and loved ones may both heal and flourish by having access to needed, new modalities of healthcare. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Kind Regards,



Amy Bolton

References

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3. Pisano, V. D., Putnam, N. P., Kramer, H. M., Franciotti, K. J., Halpern, J. H., Holden, S. C. (2017). The association of psychedelic use and opioid use disorders among illicit users in the U.S. Journal of Psychopharmacology. Web.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, March 25). Extinguishing the tobacco epidemic in Maine.
5. Johnson, M.W., Garcia-Romeu, A., Griffiths, R.R. (2017). Long-term follow-up of psilocybin-facilitated smoking cessation. The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Web.

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