

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for allowing me to speak in support of LD1582 An Act To Enact the Maine Psilocybin Services Act. My name is Craig Cardamone, I am a licensed marriage and family therapist and I reside in Portland, Maine. I value this opportunity to discuss what this bill will do for Mainers who wish to broaden their access to safe, science-based services for emotional and mental pain.

Just like the rest of the United States, Maine is in the middle of a mental health crisis. More and more people are needing mental and emotion health services, but Maine continues to lag behind in the number of providers available. Many of Maines existing mental and emotional health providers are retiring, with few young practitioners filling in the gaps. Legalizing services that utilize psilocybin, the psychoactive molecule in “magic mushrooms”, would make Maine an early adopter of this type of care and has the potential to attract young practitioners.

As much as it is exciting, psilocybin has also been shown to be highly effective in helping people explore their mental and emotional struggles. Recent research has shown that psychotherapy paired with psilocybin can be a significantly effective treatment for people suffering from major depression and anxiety related to a fear of death in patients with terminal illnesses. Our current tools, such as tradition talk psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's) do provide some relief. However, it is well known in the psychiatric and psychotherapy community that these tools often do not fully address the core pain and suffering that causes someone's depression and anxiety. SSRIs in particular have many undesirable side effects, including but not limited to sexual dysfunction, numbness, mental foginess, and, at times, an increase in suicidal thoughts. Psilocybin, on the other hand, has been shown to be a safe substance with few side effects when taken in the proper context. In my own personal experience, psilocybin has helped me far more than Prozac did in addressing my depression. Throughout my life I have suffered on and off from suicidal thoughts, severe depression, and a persistent feeling of hopelessness. In conjunction with psychotherapy, my own psilocybin use has been incredibly healing and meaningful. It has taught me how to love myself, open myself up to the pain I have experienced in my life, and love and be present with other people. Without psilocybin, I wouldn't be who I am today, which is a loving and present partner, an effective and caring psychotherapist, and an overall happy human being.

Currently, psilocybin use is on the rise due to the recent resurgence in interest around psychedelics. Despite the recent resurgence, we have not seen a drastic increase in hospitalizations from psilocybin use. What we have seen is an increase in desire for safe spaces where people can go and experience psilocybin. Due to its legal status, people are often forced to seek out such spaces in an underground and unregulated environment that has been rife with abuse and exploitation. This bill has the potential to change that, as it will bring these spaces into the mainstream and can subject them to professional ethics and requirements to ensure clients are safe and practitioners adhere to strict guidelines. This bill would also eliminate the risk of people being arrested for attempting to heal themselves or helping others in their attempts at healing.

I support this bill because I believe psilocybin is the future of healing mental and emotional wounds. At a time when mental health concerns are on the rise, we need additional options that are proven to be not only effective, but life changing. Thank you for your time and please support this bill. I am ready for any questions you may have.