

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE, ESQ.

Ought To Pass - LD 1582

An Act To Enact the Maine Psilocybin Services Act
Submitted to the

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

February 1, 2022

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, greetings. My name is Michael Kebede, and I am Policy Counsel at the ACLU of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties in Maine. On behalf of our members, I urge you to support LD 1582, as it will help protect the lives of many in Maine who struggle with substance use and mental and behavioral health disorders.

One of the many detrimental consequences of the War on Drugs has been government interference with the exploration of alternative drug therapies that could help people with many debilitating conditions like depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder. If enacted, this bill will create safety standards for trained facilitators to oversee psilocybin therapy in licensed facilities and approve licenses for facilitators, service center operators, and producers of psilocybin mushrooms and products. The bill does not allow home use of psilocybin, and does not allow marketing of any psilocybin products. If this bill is enacted, people in Maine may consume psilocybin only “at a psilocybin service center and under the supervision of a psilocybin service facilitator.”¹

In a state where lack of treatment for substance use disorders is killing hundreds every year, psilocybin therapy is particularly promising. Veteran psilocybin researcher William A. Richards, currently a psychologist at the Johns

¹ LD 1582, p. 8, ln. 30-31 (to be enacted at 28-B MRS §2007).

Hopkins University School of Medicine, writes that “[t]here is an abundance of published studies that strongly suggest that the use of psychedelic substances may be of significant value in the treatment of numerous mental health conditions.”² Research has shown psilocybin to be extremely promising to treat opioid use disorder, alcoholism, and other substance use disorders.³ This committee, and this legislature, owe it to the thousands dead, and the many hundreds who might die from lack of treatment supports, to make this therapy available.

This bill will save lives. It would ensure that Maine takes a very careful approach to the legalization of psilocybin. We urge you to vote *ought to pass*.

² William A. Richards, *Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics and Religious Experiences*, p. 139 (Columbia University Press: New York 2015) (from chapter titled “Psychedelic Frontiers in Medicine”).

³ Albert Garcia-Romeu, Alan K. Davis et al, *Persisting Reductions in Cannabis, Opioid, and Stimulant Misuse After Naturalistic Psychedelic Use: An Online Survey*, *Front. Psychiatry* (Jan. 22, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2019.00955>, available at <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2019.00955/full>.