



POLITICS

Connecticut Lawmakers Approve Bill To Fund Psilocybin And MDMA Therapy



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By Kyle Jaeger 

A Connecticut legislative committee on Friday approved a bill that would set the state up to provide certain patients with access to psychedelic-assisted treatment with substances like MDMA and psilocybin.



Before the vote, several members of the joint Public Health Committee remarked on the compelling testimony of top military officials, advocates and scientists who spoke about their experiences and the potential impact of the reform at a hearing earlier this week.

The legislation was approved on a noncontroversial basis as part of the panel's consent calendar. It now advances to floor consideration.

The measure, HB 5396, would create psychedelic treatment centers in the state, pending approval of the substances by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under its expanded access program for investigational new drugs.

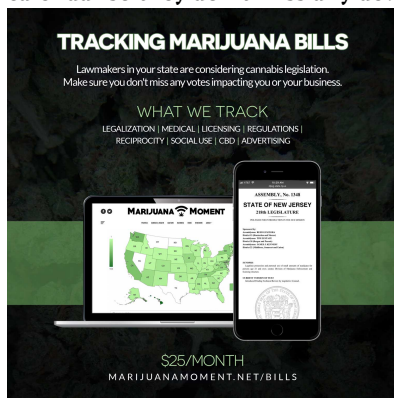
Rep. Michelle Cook (D) explained her support for the policy change, citing the "compassionate testimony that we had the other day from so many folks."



“I think that by sitting back and not doing something, as we heard the other day, is costing lives day after day after day,” the lawmaker said. “Doing nothing I think would be criminal in this regard.”

Rep. Kathy Kennedy (R) echoed her colleague’s point, saying that “the testimony that we heard was compelling, it was compassionate, it was emotional and we owe something to our veterans who have served our country and many others that would benefit from this treatment.”

—
Marijuana Moment is already [tracking more than 1,000 cannabis, psychedelics and drug policy bills](#) in state legislatures and Congress this year. [Patreon supporters](#) pledging at least \$25/month get access to our interactive maps, charts and hearing calendar so they don’t miss any developments.



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While the legislation would not legalize the psychedelics, it would set up a regulatory infrastructure to enable Connecticut to play a leading role in providing access to this alternative treatment option as federal agencies continue to fund and facilitate clinical trials.

Psychedelic therapy would be specifically provided and funded for military veterans, retired first responders, health care workers and any person from a “historically underserved community, and who has a serious or life-threatening mental or behavioral health disorder and without access to effective mental or behavioral health medication.”

Meanwhile, Gov. Ned Lamont (D) signed a separate bill last year that includes language requiring the state to [carry out a study into the therapeutic potential](#) of psilocybin mushrooms. A [workgroup](#) has since been meeting to investigate the issue.

The new measure would require the state Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to launch a “psychedelic-assisted therapy pilot program to provide qualified patients with the funding” to receive MDMA- or psilocybin-assisted therapy as part of FDA’s expanded access program. The text of the bill states



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point, state statute on the substances would be aligned with the federal government's.

One member of the panel, Rep. Liz Linehan (D), suggested on Friday that lawmakers further consider “adding in other treatments” such as ketamine.

Meanwhile, Chairman Jonathan Steinberg (D) expressed frustration with the slow pace of federal reform.

“The pilot program ends when the federal DEA approves MDMA and psilocybin for medical use,” he said, adding that “we should say ‘when and if,’ but we’re presuming ‘when.’”

“We are treading on some new ground here. We’ll be among the first number of states to try to help people” with psychedelic therapies, he said. “We heard a tremendous amount of moving testimony, particularly from veterans that this can be a game changer for them, having tried any number of other therapies for PTSD and other conditions—and not just veterans.”

“Sometimes we have to struggle with the feds. Sometimes we just wish they’d get out of our way, but it doesn’t happen very often,” Steinberg said.

In the interim, the bill would further establish a Qualified Patients for Approved Treatment Sites Fund (PAT Fund) to provide “grants to qualified applicants to provide MDMA-assisted or psilocybin assisted therapy to qualified patients under the pilot program.”

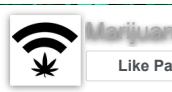
“Approved treatment sites shall collect and submit data to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, including, but not limited to, its protocols for the provision of MDMA-assisted and psilocybin-assisted treatment, training on the facilitation of such treatment, implementation of facility standards, strategies for patient protection and mitigation of drug diversion.”

The [bill](#) would further create a Connecticut Psychedelic Treatment Advisory Board under the department. Legislative leaders and the governor would be empowered to appoint members of the board.

The board would be tasked with making recommendation on the “design and development of the regulations and infrastructure necessary to safely allow for therapeutic access to psychedelic-assisted therapy upon the legalization of MDMA, psilocybin and any other psychedelic compounds.”

There would be seven key areas that the board would be responsible for advising the department on:

1. Reviewing and considering the data from the psychedelic-assisted therapy pilot program...to inform the development of such regulations
2. Advising the department on the necessary education, training, licensing and credentialing of therapists and facilitators, patient safety, harm reduction, the establishment of equity measures in both clinical and therapeutic settings, cost and insurance reimbursement considerations and standards of treatment facilities
3. Advising the department on the use of group therapy and other therapy options to reduce cost and maximize public health benefits from psychedelic treatments
4. Monitoring updated federal regulations and guidelines for referral and consideration by the state agencies of cognizance for implementation of such regulations and guidelines.
5. Developing a long-term strategic plan to improve mental health care through the use of psychedelic treatment.
6. Recommending equity measures for clinical subject recruitment and facilitator training recruitment
7. Assisting with the development of public awareness and education campaigns.



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The legislature should “continue this forward with the recognition that the FDA will continue doing their work,” Rep. Josh Elliott (D) said, but that “doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be doing ours.”

Also in Connecticut, regulators recently began [accepting certain marijuana business license applications](#) as part of the [recreational cannabis law that Lamont signed last year](#).

Meanwhile, the state’s Social Equity Council [approved a list of geographic areas disproportionately impacted](#) by the drug war, which will be used to determine eligibility for social equity business licenses. Under the state’s new cannabis program, half of all licenses must go to equity applicants, who may also qualify for lower licensing fees, technical assistance, workforce training and funding to cover startup costs.

Over the summer, Lamont also announced the launch of a new website to [provide residents with up-to-date information](#) on the state’s new marijuana legalization law.

As it stands, adults 21 and older are already able to possess up to 1.5 ounces of cannabis for personal use.

In the psychedelics space, reform is advancing in states across the country.

A Maryland House of Delegates committee on Tuesday held a hearing on a bill to create a state fund that [could be used to provide access to psychedelics](#) like psilocybin, MDMA and ketamine for military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The Washington State legislature last week sent a budget bill to the governor’s desk that includes a proposal to [direct \\$200,000 in funding to support a new workgroup](#) to study the possibility of legalizing psilocybin services in the state, including the idea of using current marijuana regulatory systems to track psychedelic mushrooms.

Last week, the Hawaii Senate approved a bill to set up a state working group to [study the therapeutic benefits of psilocybin mushrooms](#) and develop a “long-term” plan to ensure that the psychedelic is accessible for medical use for adults 21 and older.

Also last week, the Oklahoma House of Representatives passed a bill this week to [decriminalize low-level possession of psilocybin](#) and promote research into the therapeutic potential of the psychedelic.

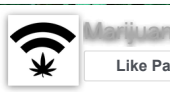
A bipartisan coalition of Georgia lawmakers recently filed a resolution that [calls for the formation of a House study committee](#) to investigate the therapeutic potential of psychedelics like psilocybin and make recommendations for reforms.

Rhode Island lawmakers introduced [a pair of drug decriminalization bills this month](#)—including one focused on psilocybin and buprenorphine that would authorize doctors to prescribe the psychedelic mushroom.

Also this month, a Missouri Republican lawmaker filed a bill that would [legalize a wide range of psychedelics for therapeutic use](#) at designated care facilities while further decriminalizing low-level possession in general.

Last month, [Utah lawmakers sent a bill to the governor](#) that would create a task force to study and make recommendations on the [therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs](#) and possible regulations for their lawful use.

An Oregon Senate committee also recently advanced a bill to ensure that equity is [built into the state’s historic therapeutic psilocybin program](#) that’s actively being implemented following voter approval in 2020.



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California Sen. Scott Wiener (D) told Marijuana Moment in a recent interview that his bill to [legalize psychedelics possession](#) stands a 50/50 chance of reaching the governor's desk this year. It already cleared the full Senate and two Assembly committees during the first half of the two-year session.

Washington State lawmakers [also introduced legislation in January](#) that would legalize what the bill calls "supported psilocybin experiences" by adults 21 and older.

New Hampshire lawmakers filed measures to [decriminalize psilocybin and all drugs](#).

Legislation was [also enacted by the Texas legislature](#) last year requiring the state to study the medical risks and benefits of psilocybin, MDMA and ketamine for military veterans in partnership with Baylor College of Medicine and a military-focused medical center.

A pair of Michigan senators also introduced a bill in September to [legalize the possession, cultivation and delivery](#) of an array of plant- and fungi-derived psychedelics like psilocybin and mescaline.

In a setback for the movement, California activists on Wednesday announced that they have come up short on collecting enough signatures to [qualify a measure to legalize psilocybin mushrooms](#) for the state's November ballot, though they aren't giving up on a future election cycle bid.

Colorado activists, meanwhile, recently selected one of the four psychedelics reform ballot initiatives that they drafted and filed for the November ballot, choosing to [proceed with a measure to legalize psilocybin](#), create licensed "healing centers" where people can use the psychedelic for therapeutic purposes and provide a pathway for record sealing for prior convictions. A competing campaign [filed a different psychedelics legalization last month](#).

Michigan activists [filed a statewide ballot initiative](#) last month that would legalize possessing, cultivating and sharing psychedelics and set up a system for their therapeutic and spiritual use.

At the congressional level, bipartisan lawmakers sent a letter to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) last month, urging that the agency [allow terminally ill patients to use psilocybin](#) as an investigational treatment without the fear of federal prosecution.

Photo courtesy of [Dick Culbert](#).

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Kyle Jaeger



Kyle Jaeger is Marijuana Moment's Sacramento-based senior editor. His work has also appeared in High Times, VICE and attn.

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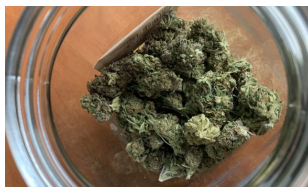
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By Kyle Jaeger

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Maryland senators on Monday signaled that they may follow the House’s lead by putting the issue of marijuana legalization on the state’s November ballot and delay creating comprehensive regulations for the market until next year after voters make their decision.


Monday’s hearing before the Senate Finance Committee was a whirlwind. There were three marijuana reform bills on the [agenda](#): two from Del. Luke Clippinger (D) [that already passed the House](#) and another from Sen. Brian Feldman (D).

But rather than tackle each proposal one-by-one, members discussed possible revisions to the Senate bill to more closely align it with one of Clippinger’s bills on setting preliminary rules if

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Maryland Senators Signal They May Follow House's Lead by Putting the Issue of Marijuana Legalization on the State's November Ballot and Delaying Regulation until Next Year after Voters Make their Decision. In Committee: "We're not going to rush the...committee's vote on the bill until we have a clear finish line this year." <https://www.marijuanamoment.net/maryland-senators-signal-they-may-follow-house-s-lead-by-putting-the-issue-of-marijuana-legalization-on-the-states-november-ballot-and-delaying-regulation-until-next-year-after-voters-make-their-decision/>



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Michigan activists have launched a mass signature drive to place a measure on this November’s statewide ballot to legalize possessing, cultivating and sharing psychedelics while setting up a system for their therapeutic and spiritual use.

The state Board of State Canvassers certified the latest version of initiative last week. Activists with Decriminalize Nature Michigan said in a press release on Monday that they’ve already gotten to work, with leaders of the campaign putting their signatures on the first batch of petitions.

Decriminalize Nature, its Michigan chapter and the youth-led organization Students for

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Most New Yorkers voters are against allowing people with prior marijuana convictions to get a head start in launching adult-use retail stores in the state, a new poll found just days after [regulators approved a proposal to do just that](#).

The survey from Siena College shows that only 33 percent of New Yorkers favor “ensuring that many of the first licenses for marijuana retail stores go to those previously convicted of marijuana-related crimes or their family members,” compared to 54 percent who are opposed and 13 percent who said they aren’t sure.

It’s an interesting data point. as there’s generallyv widespread consensus among legalization

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