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POLITICS

GOP Congressman's Amendment Direct Military To Study Psilocybin... MDMA Benefits For Service Member



Published 1 week ago on July 1, 2022

By Kyle Jaeger 



A GOP congressman wants to explore the therapeutic potential of psilocybin mushrooms and MDMA as alternatives to opioids for military service members, filing an amendment Thursday that would promote research into the substances through an annual defense



Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL), who has been vocal about his [support for marijuana legalization](#) interest in psychedelics reform, is seeking to attach the amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). It would build upon another cannabis-focused amendment that was already approved by the House Armed Services Committee last week.

The existing provision from Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA) calls for a Department of Defense (DOD)-led study into [the efficacy of cannabis as an opioid alternative](#). Gaetz is requesting to broaden that language to also cover psilocybin and MDMA.

The new [amendment](#) would expand the study “by including MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) and psilocybin mushrooms in the study on alternative treatments for prescription opioids in the treatment of members of the Armed Forces on terminal illness

preceding separation, retirement, or release from active duty,” according to a summary by the House Rules Committee.

The original cannabis amendment that’s already attached to NDAA for Fiscal Year 2020 specifies who would be eligible to participate in the marijuana study. It would be limited to service members with post-traumatic stress disorder, a traumatic brain injury or “any condition involving severe pain.”

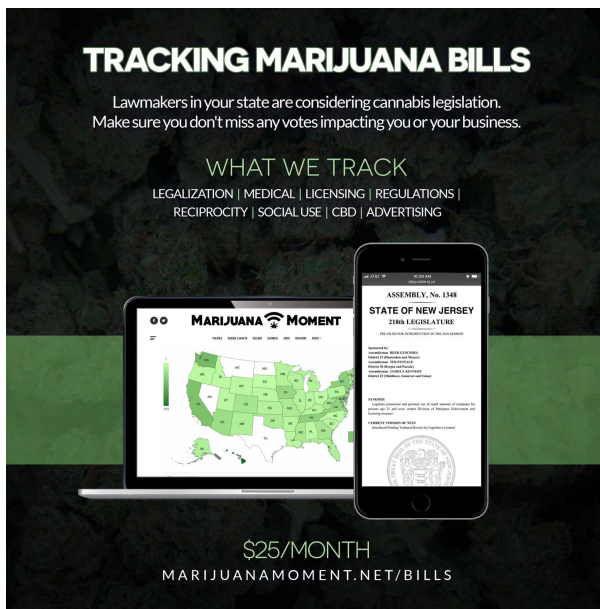
Gaetz’s proposal must be made in order in the Rules Committee before potentially reaching House floor consideration. That panel will [decide](#) which submitted amendments can be considered at an upcoming meeting that has not yet been scheduled.

In 2019, Gaetz also [cosponsored an appropriations amendment](#) led by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) that sought to remove an existing rider that advocates say inhibits the therapeutic potential of Schedule I drugs, including psychedelics and marijuana. The amendment was defeated on the floor on two occasions, and the [longstanding prohibition language is once again](#) included in the relevant funding bill this year—though it remains to be seen if reform-minded lawmakers will file another amendment to remove it this time.

The Armed Services Committee, meanwhile, also recently approved a separate amendment to NDAA from Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD). The measure concerns cannabis sentencing standards under military code, mandating that the Military Justice Review Panel “develop recommendations specifying appropriate sentencing ranges for offenses involving the possession of marijuana.”

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Rep. Ed Perlmutter (D-CO) [also proposed an amendment to the defense bill](#) on Thursday that would protect financial institutions that work with state-legal cannabis businesses from being penalized by federal regulators. It's the congressman's latest attempt to get the Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act enacted this year, following a recent agreement from House leadership to [exclude it from separate manufacturing legislation](#).

Perlmutter attempted to get the cannabis banking language attached to the last version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), but it was not ultimately included in the final package.

With respect to psychedelics policy, the House Appropriations Committee recently released a report for a 2023 Fiscal Year spending bill for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CSJ) that [calls for a federal review of psilocybin policy](#). Specifically, it asks the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct an analysis on barriers to state, local and tribal programs for the psychedelic under federal prohibition.

Relatedly, officials at two agencies within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have acknowledged in a letter to two U.S. senators that federal prohibition [makes it harder to realize the benefits of psychedelics](#), requiring researchers to jump through additional regulatory hoops.

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

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