



Home > Marijuana News > Oregon County Proposes Ban on Psilocybin Therapy

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Oregon County Proposes Ban on Psilocybin Therapy

The Linn County, Oregon county commission has approved a proposal to have voters decide on banning psilocybin treatment centers authorized by a 2020 statewide initiative.



BY A.J. HERRINGTON · JUNE 27, 2022



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Local leaders in Linn County, Oregon are advancing a proposal that would ban psilocybin therapy centers authorized by a statewide ballot measure legalizing the therapeutic use of psychedelic mushrooms. Under a proposal adopted by the Linn County Board of Commissioners last week, a ballot measure banning psilocybin production, manufacturing, and therapy facilities will appear before voters in the November 2022 general election.

In 2020, **Oregon voters approved Measure 109**, Oregon Psilocybin Services Act, a bill that legalized the therapeutic use of psilocybin. State officials are currently **drafting regulations to enact the legislation**, which authorizes centers where trained facilitators dispense psilocybin for therapeutic purposes.

Under Measure 109, local jurisdictions such as counties, cities, and towns were given the authority to regulate psilocybin therapy centers or refer a decision on the issue to voters in the community. On June 21, the three-member board of commissioners voted to put a measure banning the psilocybin therapy centers in Linn County before voters in this year's general election.

"My fear is of young people taking mushrooms and going out and doing things that may cost them their life," Linn County Commissioner Roger Nyquist **told the *Albany Democrat-Herald***.

"I just think it's appropriate to refer this measure to the voters in Linn County and allow them to have a say in this, particularly because they did not vote to support this measure in the first place," he added.

Commissioner Will Tucker said that he is concerned that first responders will not be able to reach the scene quickly enough if a patient receiving psilocybin therapy in the remote county in central Oregon has a medical emergency.



Tucker noted that if passed, the ballot measure would only apply to the unincorporated areas of Linn County. The proposal would not affect the incorporated cities and towns in the county including the largest city, Albany, although local officials there are considering a similar ban on psilocybin therapy centers.

"I would love to see it done carefully and in controlled ways," Tucker said. "My son suffers PTSD; an Iraq War sniper, he has 100 percent disability ... If there's a way his mental health can be affected by marijuana or other drugs including mushrooms, I'd be all for it."

Few Counties Moving To Ban Psilocybin Therapy Centers

Evan Segura, president of the Portland Psychedelic Society, says that it does not appear that counties taking steps to ban psilocybin therapy is becoming a trend. But at least one county along the Idaho border, Malheur County, has proposed a ban. He noted that the jurisdiction is already the home to several cannabis dispensaries that draw customers from neighboring states that have not yet legalized cannabis.

"I think these counties are anticipating there will be a huge wave of interest from Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, jumping over the state border to access psilocybin services," Segura said. "These conservative counties are just not interested in being guinea pigs for this program, and I'm sure there's a lot of drug-war prohibitionist hysteria that's causing fear for them."

Statewide, Oregon voters approved Measure 109 in the 2020 general election with 56% of ballots cast in favor of the initiative and 44% against. But in rural Linn County, only 45% of the electorate voted in favor of psilocybin therapy centers while 55% opposed the ballot measure. Statewide, 21 of 36 Oregon voted against Measure 109, although the initiative's success in more populous counties secured its passage.

Linn County Commissioner Sherrie Sprenger said she does not believe Measure 109 will achieve the stated goal of curbing the illicit market for psilocybin, an argument made for



“The situation many rural folks in Oregon find themselves in frequently is this idea that our voice wasn’t heard and our voice wasn’t taken into consideration,” Sprenger said.

“Sometimes we feel like the metropolitan areas, i.e. Portland and Eugene, make decisions for the rest of us. Local voters need to have a say in their own community.”

Segura said that many of those opposed to psilocybin therapy centers are concerned that someone will get behind the wheel of an automobile immediately after an all-day session, particularly those who might not have the means to afford overnight accommodations. But he does not see a significant risk in the argument.

“I think that situation is extremely rare,” Segura said. “I think if people can afford the session, they can afford a hotel, if not just stay at a service center that provides lodging. I think there’s minimal risk of someone going to do psilocybin then getting in their car and driving away.”

“We don’t ever hear of stories of people eating mushrooms and then doing something dangerous,” Segura added. “We would hear more of it if it happened more often.”

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