



To : Chair Lyons and Members of the Senate Health & Welfare Committee
From: Stephanie Winters, Vermont Medical Society & Vermont Psychiatric Association, swinters@vtmd.org
Date: February 29, 2024
RE: S. 114 – Removal of Criminal Penalties & Establishment of Psychedelic Therapy Advisory Working Group

I am submitting written comments this morning on behalf of the Vermont Medical Society and Vermont Psychiatric Association, Vermont's membership organization for psychiatrists.

We have three comments regarding S. 114.

First, we believe that the criminal penalties for the possession, dispensing or selling of psilocybin removed by Section 2 should be informed by the findings of the Advisory Working Group – and that the Working Group should be tasked with making recommendations regarding whether criminal penalties should be removed and in what circumstances (for example, what quantities, and for selling, possessing or dispensing or only some of those circumstances). While there is promising research in development regarding psilocybin, especially those using it in controlled and monitored circumstances, this is very different than in all circumstances removing criminal penalties. A statewide policy change in this direction should be further informed by data and the experience of other states – which the Work Group could examine.

Second, we believe that the members of the working group should be expanded to make sure that it is comprehensive and balanced. We suggest adding representation from:

1. The Commissioner of Health or designee;
2. The Executive Director of the Board of Medical Practice or designee;
3. A member appointed by the Vermont Psychiatric Association.

Currently, the workgroup is missing any representation from public health or MDs or physician assistants - who may participate in such a program – or their regulators.

Third, we believe that charging the work group with laying out timelines for achieving “universal and equitable access to psychedelic assisted treatments” may be beyond the reasonable scope of the workgroup and would require a complex examination of issues such as sourcing psilocybin, affordability, insurance coverage, availability of mental health clinicians generally, and more. We believe it would be a more feasible charge to ask the Work Group to: “(4) provide potential timelines for providing universal and equitable access to psychedelic assisted treatments as recommended by subsection (c)(2).”

Thank you for considering our feedback on S. 114. I would be happy to provide further information as useful to your work.