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February 28, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Health & Welfare

From: Dr. Rick Barnett, Psy.D.  
Legislative Chair, Vermont Psychological Association  
Co-Founder, Psychedelic Society of Vermont

Re: S.114

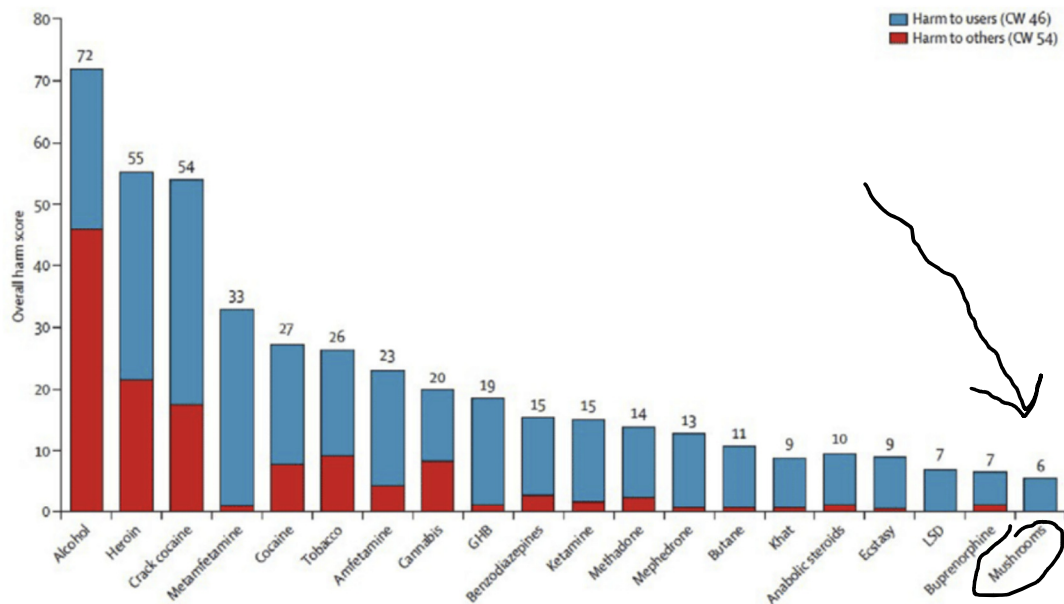
To the Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the Senate Committee on Health & Welfare:

Thank you for your commitment to the health and mental health of Vermonters. Please accept this written testimony *in support* of S.114, an act relating to removing criminal penalties for possessing, dispensing, or selling psilocybin and establishment of the Psychedelic Therapy Advisory Working Group. This support is on behalf of the Psychedelic Society of Vermont, which I cofounded in 2021 and the Vermont Psychological Association, on whose Board of Director I have served for over 15 years, currently as Chair of the Legislative Committee.

As a psychologist-doctorate and alcohol and drug counselor for 20 years with 2 master's degrees (psychology and psychopharmacology), I know mental health and addiction from research to practice and policy. As a person in long-term recovery from addiction, someone who has used psychedelic drugs in the past in healthy and unhealthy ways, I know the risks and benefits of psychedelic medicines. As a 16 year old, I was arrested for a charge related to psychedelic drugs and I know the impact of the drug war and the criminalization of drug possession and use.

S.114 as written serves two purposes: 1/ to remove psilocybin from the list of illegal drug in Vermont statute (while it would remain federally illegal, Schedule I drug with no medicinal use and high potential for abuse) and 2/ to establish a working group comprised of key people to write a report related to the possible creation of a psychedelic therapy system in Vermont, ahead of FDA approval and full medicalization. In essence, S.114 is a decriminalization and psychedelic therapy regulatory system bill. And BOTH are important.

Psychedelic use is on the increase, mainly for personal use and personal health, growth, and wellness. Vermonters are often seeking out information from health professionals and beyond to find information on the use of psychedelic substances before or after psychedelic experiences. Psilocybin is the safest of these substances (see graph below), the easiest to obtain, and the most prolific in our state and around the country. Vermont has decriminalized possession of buprenorphine without a prescription and has legalized cannabis: both drugs arguably far more detrimental than psilocybin AND both with health benefits.



Normalized ratings of harm potential of psilocybin ("mushrooms") relative to other drugs as rated by experts in the United Kingdom using on a multidimensional scale. Drugs are ranked by overall harm from left (most harmful) to right (least harmful), with harm to users (blue) and harm to others (red) shown separately. Abbreviations: CW ¼ cumulative weight, GHB ¼ gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (Figure from Nutt et al., 2010, Fig. 2).

In summary, the rationale for S. 114 with decriminalization and the advisory group is as follows:

- Psilocybin is a safe substance when used with support or alone with the right mindset and setting.
- Psilocybin is easily grown in one's home and the "kits" containing spores and "grow bags" are legal and proliferating around the country.
- Two states (Oregon and Colorado) have already decriminalized or legalized psilocybin along with several municipalities around the country. [See this resource](#)\*
- There is little to no risk for addiction to psilocybin, it has been shown to reduce tobacco use, alcohol use, cocaine use, and is currently being studied to treat opioid use disorder.

Thank you for your support of S.114

With Gratitude,  
Rick Barnett, PsyD.

\*<https://psychedelicalpha.com/data/psychedelic-laws>