March 1, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund, Chair Liebling, and members of the committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Representative Smith's HF 1884, which aims to establish a task force in Minnesota to investigate the therapeutic potential of psychedelic medicines.

As a licensed independent clinical social worker (LICSW) and psychotherapist with 17 years of experience in the mental health field in Minnesota, I have seen firsthand how trauma can lead to a host of mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, substance addiction, and even suicide. Unfortunately, our current mental health system is not adequately equipped to address these challenges, and we are in dire need of more effective treatments.

While we have developed some good methods to "manage" symptoms, we rarely get to the root of the problem, and our clients often end up surviving rather than thriving. For some clients, we consider it a success when they are not actively suicidal or an immediate danger to others, while they continue to suffer profoundly because the core issues elude us.

What we need are therapies that truly heal and restore, rather than merely manage symptoms. This is precisely what psychedelic therapies aim to do. When delivered within a proper psychotherapeutic regimen, psychedelic experiences can help individuals reconnect to their own inner sources of resiliency and promote a process of healing from the inside out, as opposed to the outside in.

As a certified psychedelic-assisted therapist through the California Institute for Integral Studies (and MAPS trained clinician), I have witnessed the transformative effects of these substances when delivered safely and in combination with comprehensive therapeutic protocols.

While we currently use Ketamine in Minnesota within a psychedelic-assisted therapy framework, the therapeutic potential of MDMA and psilocybin is much broader and very promising. According to research, MDMA may be the most effective treatment for severe PTSD, and psilocybin may be effective for a range of disorders, from OCD to end-of-life anxiety. Current research into MDMA suggests a recovery rate of about 70%, meaning participants no longer meet criteria for PTSD 12 months post-treatment. This is astounding and far exceeds the efficacy of the best existing treatment interventions. Additionally, terminally ill participants in psilocybin-assisted therapy have found peace and acceptance of their own death, which is a powerful testimony to the benefits of these medicines.

I also believe that these substances must be approached with caution, rigor, thoughtfulness, and integrity. Establishing a task force will allow for the proper investigation of psychedelics and their therapeutic application, as well as the coordination of local and national experts to support Minnesota in developing novel interventions for addressing our current mental health crisis.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kyle Keller, MSW LICSW