March 3, 2023

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

I am writing to express my support for bill HF 1884 by Representative Smith, which aims to establish a task force to investigate the potential of psychedelic medicines. Further understanding the therapeutic potential of psychedelic substances would have a significant impact on the treatment of mental health conditions, specifically those caused by traumatic experiences.

I am a licensed professional clinical counselor and have worked in the mental health field in Minnesota for the past 15 years across various settings. For the past five years, my clinical work has involved psychedelic therapy using ketamine specifically. Throughout my time in the mental health field, my primary focus has been on individuals who have struggled with complex trauma and PTSD. Traumatic experiences can come from a multitude of life events but share one thing in common: difficulty in cultivating and maintaining a meaningful life. Individuals with severe trauma often endure homelessness, financial insecurity, social isolation, and lack of connection with loved ones.

Traditional psychotherapy combined with medication management are the mental health field's primary tools. While some experience success, unfortunately, many do not or cannot sustain it. Often as therapists, we are working to help our clients gain some sense of stability but often are never able to address the core, underlying issues. Psychedelics offer the potential for experiencing powerful non-ordinary states of consciousness, which can allow individuals to access innate sources of healing in a manner that traditional talk therapy does not.

Historically, our state has been a leader in promoting access to quality mental health care, and I believe psychedelics could add tremendously to what we have already built here. I can attest to anecdotal evidence in the 50-75 clients I have directly worked with and can cite numerous research articles and books written on this subject, to evidence the therapeutic potential of these substances.

Ketamine is the only legal psychedelic currently available in Minnesota and has been a very helpful tool in working with treatment resistant mental health conditions. Additionally, psychedelic treatments such as MDMA and psilocybin offer promising therapeutic benefits to those suffering from PTSD and other chronic mental health conditions.

As a trauma therapist, my primary motivation in writing this letter is to encourage a deeper exploration into the medicinal uses of psychedelics in Minnesota. I understand that with new therapies, there needs to be research, understanding, and safeguards in place to ensure safety. I believe that with proper understanding and support, these medicines can be utilized in safe and supportive environments that offer healing that our current models are not currently able.

Thank you,

Kyle Ross, LPCC