

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA  
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
*Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā*  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
ON  
SENATE BILL NO. 1042, S.D. 1

**March 14, 2025  
9:00 a.m.  
Room 329 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

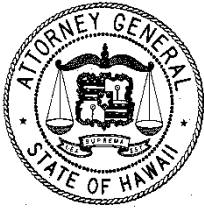
The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 1042, S.D. 1, amends Chapter 321, HRS, to: 1) establish in the State Treasury the Mental Health Emerging Therapies Special Fund (MHETSF) to be administered by the Department of Health (DOH); 2) appropriate an undetermined amount of general funds for FY 26 and FY 27 to be deposited into the MHETSF; and 3) appropriate an undetermined amount of special funds out of the MHETSF for FY 26 and FY 27 to be expended by DOH to support clinical research and the use of emerging therapies for treating mental and behavioral health disorders.

As a matter of general policy, B&F does not support the creation of any special fund, which does not meet the requirements of Section 37-52.3, HRS. Special funds should: 1) serve a need as demonstrated by the purpose, scope of work, and an explanation why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; 2) reflect a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon the users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and

the sources of revenue; 3) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity; and 4) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining. Regarding S.B. No. 1042, S.D. 1, it is difficult to determine whether the proposed special fund would be self-sustaining.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

S.B. NO. 1042, S.D. 1, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

**DATE:** Friday, March 14, 2025

**TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 329

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Alana L. Bryant, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Takayama and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish the mental health emerging therapies special fund (fund) to support clinical research and the development of emerging therapies for the treatment of mental health and behavioral health disorders; (2) appropriate general funds into the fund; and (3) appropriate funds out of the fund for the fund's purposes.

Section 1 of the bill would establish the fund to be administered by the Department of Health, but the fund may not meet the requirements of section 37-52.3, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), which provides that special funds shall: (1) serve a need as demonstrated by the purpose and scope of the program and an explanation of why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; (2) reflect a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon program users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue; (3) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity; and (4) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining.

The bill does not describe the scope of the program, including financial information on fees to be charged, sources of projected revenue, and costs; contain an explanation as to why the special fund could not be successfully implemented under the general fund appropriation process; reflect a clear nexus between the benefits

sought and charges made upon the program users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue; provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity that is used only when essential to the successful operation of the program or activity; or demonstrate how the initiative will be financially self-sustaining.

We suggest adding a purpose section to the bill that explains how the fund meets the requirements of section 37-52.3, HRS.

We respectfully ask the Committee to make the recommended amendments if this bill is to pass. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE  
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
415 S.BERETANIA ST. #415  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 1042 SD1  
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health

March 14, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., Room Number: 329

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** S.B. 1042 SD1, Relating to Mental Health and requests amendments.

In 2023, the OWR convened a task force—comprised of Hawai'i-based mental health professionals, government agency representatives, legislators, physicians, therapists, and other community members—with the objective of exploring current national research and movements regarding expanding access to psilocybin. Research continues to provide significant data on psilocybin, yielding unprecedented efficacy and positive outcomes in clinical treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, addiction, end-of-life anxiety in terminal patients, eating disorders, treatment-resistant depression and more.

The OWR believes that S.B. 1042 SD 1 provides an important opportunity to create a pathway for those in need to have access to innovative and potentially life-saving treatments for trauma and mental health challenges, within the context of a closely monitored clinical research.

Thus, the OWR humbly requests amendments to S.B. 1042 SD1, attached to this testimony. Below is the summary of the amendments we are requesting, in which we address concerns and questions that were raised in previous hearings for S.B. 1042 SD1.

1. Amend to place the program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience.
2. Remove special fund.
3. Add requirement that public fund appropriations shall be matched by private dollars.
4. Enable OWR to partner with appropriate public or private stakeholders, such as, but not limited to the Department of Health and the University of Hawai'i.
5. Narrow the scope of the patient access program to focus on clinical trials.
6. Provide recommendations based on those trials to enable those with mental health and behavioral health needs to access emerging therapies.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Tia L. R. Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA  
Director, Office of Wellness and Resilience  
Office of the Governor

Attachment: Draft Bill Language with Proposed Amendments

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

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RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       Section 1. The legislature finds that addressing the mental  
2 health crisis affecting the residents of the state of Hawaii,  
3 particularly veterans, who face disproportionately high rates of  
4 suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is of the  
5 utmost importance. Suicide is a leading cause of death among  
6 veterans, with studies indicating that veterans are at a  
7 significantly higher risk of suicide compared to the general  
8 population, underscoring the urgent need for innovative and  
9 effective mental health interventions.

10       The legislature further finds that the United States Food  
11 and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted breakthrough therapy  
12 designation to emerging treatments, such as MDMA-assisted  
13 therapy for PTSD and psilocybin therapy for treatment-resistant  
14 depression, recognizing their potential to offer rapid and  
15 substantial improvements over existing treatments. These  
16 therapies, when administered in clinical settings with the  
17 proper safeguards, have demonstrated promising results in

# S.B. NO.

1 reducing symptoms of PTSD and suicidal ideation, particularly  
2 among veterans who have not responded to conventional  
3 treatments.

4 The Legislature finds that establishing a Mental Health  
5 Emerging Therapies Pilot Project within the Office of Wellness  
6 and Resilience, using private monies to match state funds, will  
7 enable the State to assess the feasibility, effectiveness, and  
8 accessibility of these cutting-edge therapies for individuals in  
9 Hawaii who stand to benefit the most. By investing evidence-  
10 based, emerging treatments through a pilot project the State of  
11 Hawaii can lead the way in expanding mental health care options,  
12 improving health outcomes, and reducing veteran suicide rates.

13 Accordingly, the purpose of this act is to establish in the  
14 Office of Wellness and Resilience the Mental Health Emerging  
15 Therapies Pilot Program.

16 Section 2. (a) There is established in the office of  
17 wellness and resilience the mental health emerging therapies  
18 pilot program.

19 (b) The mental health emerging therapies pilot program  
20 shall support clinical research and the development of emerging

# S.B. NO.

therapies for the treatment of mental health and behavioral health disorders. Among other purposes, the pilot program may:

(1) Establish partnerships with public and private stakeholders such as public agencies, academic institutions, health care providers, or any others as may be appropriate;

(2) Fund phase three clinical trials of United States Food and Drug Administration breakthrough therapies, investor-initiated clinical trials, or other clinical trials, including trials to

(A) Inform optimal methods of treatment delivery;

(B) Inform transdiagnostic safety and efficacy; and

(C) Inform patient access, patient support services, and real world data collection and analysis;

(3) Fund education and training opportunities for mental health professionals;

(4) Support public education and harm reduction;

(5) Fund implementation studies, including research and analyses of best practices, cost effectiveness, and methods to reduce treatment costs; and

(6) Provide recommendations for expanding patient access, patient support services, and other means by which those with

# S.B. NO.

1 mental health and behavioral health needs may access emerging  
2 therapies.

3 (c) The office of wellness and resilience may contract with  
4 a third party to administer funding under the mental health  
5 emerging therapies pilot program.

6 (d) The office of wellness and resilience may adopt rules  
7 without regard to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to  
8 administer the pilot program.

9 (e) The office of wellness and resilience shall submit to  
10 the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening  
11 of each regular session, beginning with the regular session of  
12 2026, a report of:

13 (1) The studies funded and efforts supported by the mental  
14 health emerging therapies pilot program in the previous year;

15 (2) Any findings and recommendations; and

16 (3) Any proposed legislation.

17 (f) For the purposes of this section:

18 "Compassionate use" means treating patients suffering from  
19 terminal or life-threatening conditions, including treatment-  
20 resistant mental health conditions under either the federal

# S.B. NO.

1 Right to Try Act, Public Law 115-176, or the Food and Drug  
2 Administration Expanded Access program (21 U.S.C. 360bbb(b)).

3 "Emerging therapies" means any psychedelic or entactogenic  
4 compound or mixture that is either:

5 (1) Undergoing clinical trials regulated by the United  
6 States Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of mental  
7 or behavioral health conditions;

8 (2) Approved by the United States Food and Drug  
9 Administration for marketing in interstate commerce; or

10 (3) Approved for medical use under Hawaii law.

11 "United States Food and Drug Administration breakthrough  
12 therapies" means investigational drugs that have been granted  
13 breakthrough therapy designation by the United States Food and  
14 Drug Administration under section 506(a) of the Food, Drug, and  
15 Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 356(a)).

16 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of\$ or so much  
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
19 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
20 2026-2027 for the mental health emerging therapies pilot  
21 program.

# S.B. NO.

1       The sums appropriated shall be expended by the office of  
2 wellness and resilience for the purposes of this Act, provided  
3 they shall be matched by non-State dollars.

4       SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on December 31, 2050.

5

INTRODUCED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

**Report Title:**

DOH; Mental Health; Emerging Therapies, Breakthrough Therapies;  
Pilot Program; Reports; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes and appropriates moneys for a Mental Health Emerging  
Therapies Pilot Program in the Office of Wellness and  
Resilience. Requires annual reports to the Legislature.  
Effective 12/31/2050. (Proposed HD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is  
not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*



1401 S. Beretania St. Suite 450  
Honolulu, HI, 96814

## IN SUPPORT:

SB1042

- Establishes and appropriates moneys for a mental health emerging therapies special fund

2-10-2025

I am a board certified psychiatrist in Honolulu. My clinical expertise is in suicide risk and depression. I often treat suicidal, depressed people who failed numerous medications.

Patients come to me all the time saying their SSRI's don't work, and someone they know committed suicide on them. They want alternatives. They hear that psychedelics are safer than antidepressants, **and more effective**. And so what do I tell them?

That sorry, but they are federally illegal.

Even though these substances could literally save my patients' lives... This has been verified by large studies: **psilocybin reduces suicide risk.** (R.Griffiths, 2015.)

But I have to say, "sorry, illegal."

Are we in Hawaii supporting these citizens needs? Usually they say, "but won't Hawaii fund studies? Don't they care? Isn't there a medical school that's interested?"

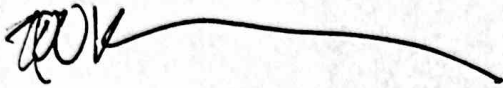
I can only give them disappointing answers.

People have committed suicide waiting for this research to be completed. Most standard antidepressants are far riskier, and can increase the risk of suicide. They can cause an array of other problems, such as glaucoma and Parkinsonism, or risk of stroke in the elderly due to thinning of the blood.

ph (808) 457-1082  
fax (808) 356-1649

Vexed and worried people in Hawaii need legislators to advocate for them, and to pass laws allowing studies to occur...

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TC', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Tom Cook, M.D.

*ph (808) 457-1082*  
*fax (808) 356-1649*



# Aloha Integrative Mental Health

PO Box 162, Mountain View, HI 96771

[www.alohaimh.com](http://www.alohaimh.com)

email: [admin@alohaimh.com](mailto:admin@alohaimh.com)

## Written Testimony in Support of Hawaii SB1042

Date: 02/11/2025

To: Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

**From:** LeAnn Neilson  
Owner PMHNP-BC  
Aloha Integrative Mental Health  
18-1228 Kona Street  
Mountain View, HI 96771

## Re: Support for SB1042

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1042 (SB1042). I would be honored to present my testimony in person, however I can not take the time away from my patients to do so. As a mental healthcare provider, business owner, and resident of Hawaii, I believe this bill addresses important issues that are crucial to the well-being of our state, especially in light of the significant trauma related to trauma, such as the Lahaina fires, limited mental health care providers and threadbare mental health support available within the state.

Psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the **most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings**. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation. **I highly**

Phone: 808-797-2621

Email: [admin@alohaimh.com](mailto:admin@alohaimh.com)

Fax: 808-452-1306

**value the potential for thorough and effective mental health care when using psychedelic medicine for the following ways:**

**Clinical trials have demonstrated that psilocybin therapy can reduce PTSD symptoms and anxiety associated with trauma. For example, a study by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) found that MDMA, combined with therapy, could be effective for PTSD. Psilocybin, used similarly, could provide similar benefits, with the added advantage of potentially fewer sessions due to the lasting effects of a SINGLE DOSE.**

**Veteran and First Responder Treatment: Veterans and first responders, who often experience high levels of PTSD, have benefited from psilocybin therapy. By addressing the root causes of trauma, such as combat exposure or traumatic events, psilocybin allows for deep emotional healing and reduction in PTSD symptoms.**

**Research from Johns Hopkins University has shown that psilocybin, when combined with psychotherapy, can lead to significant reductions in depressive symptoms. In one study, 67% of participants experienced a reduction in symptoms lasting for months after a SINGLE psilocybin session.**

**Patients who have undergone psilocybin-assisted therapy for depression often report lasting improvements in mood, outlook, and overall life satisfaction. This is especially promising for individuals with treatment-resistant depression, who have typically struggled to find lasting relief with conventional antidepressants.**

**Psilocybin's ability to induce profound experiences can help individuals gain new insights into their addictive behaviors. Many individuals report experiencing a sense of clarity and insight into the root causes of their addiction, such as past trauma, emotional pain, or unresolved issues. This can enable them to develop healthier coping mechanisms.**

**The psychedelic experience can increase self-awareness, allowing individuals to understand the triggers and patterns that fuel their addiction. With the help of therapists, patients can integrate this understanding into their daily lives, reducing the need to rely on addictive substances or behaviors for emotional regulation.**

**Psilocybin can foster a sense of empathy and connection with others, which is often lacking in individuals struggling with addiction. By encouraging a sense of oneness, it can reduce feelings of isolation that often drive substance use, leading to a more positive, healing mindset.**

**SB1042 is particularly vital because it will address the urgent need for mental health services for individuals impacted by the Lahaina fire, Hawaii residents struggling with treatment resistant mental health conditions as well as struggling with addiction. By ensuring the availability of alternative resources, it offers crucial support to those facing emotional and psychological challenges. This bill is**

a critical step toward improving mental health care that is thorough, time efficient, and sustainable, thereby improving access and utilizing the available mental health support in a more effective manner.

As a psychiatric nurse practitioner, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that our communities face in the aftermath of disaster and during times of hardship. Traditional models of mental health care can compound distress in Hawaii due to lack of available providers, medication treatments that can cause detrimental side effects, and difficulty accessing quality care. Alternative therapy offers a more advanced model for total mental health improvement that can be achieved in a shorter amount of time and is long lasting, improving availability and access to resources. For example, many individuals and families have struggled to access mental health support due to the overburdened mental healthcare system in Hawaii, which has resulted in a prolonged period of emotional and physical distress. SB1042 provides a comprehensive approach to address these challenges and is a necessary step forward for our state's recovery and resilience.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. **If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support SB1042. By doing so, we will provide crucial resources and support to those in need, strengthen the recovery efforts in our state, and promote long-term resilience for all Hawaiians. I appreciate your attention to this matter and your commitment to improving the lives of our residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. [unclear] PMHNP BC". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 2:26:24 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelsea Rorer	MindWave Medicine	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,**

My name is Chelsea Rorer, and I am a resident of Waialua, HI. I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and the development of breakthrough therapies. This bill is crucial in expanding access to safe, evidence-based treatments for mental health disorders and providing patients with the tools they need to heal.

As a dual board-certified nurse practitioner in psychiatry and acute care (PMHNP-BC and AGACNP-BC) with over 14 years of experience in emergency medicine, I have witnessed the devastating impact mental health challenges have on individuals and families. I recently opened my own interventional psychiatry clinic specializing in ketamine-assisted psychotherapy, and I have completed a yearlong psychedelic-assisted therapy certification program with the Interventional Psychiatry Institute, where we focused on ketamine, MDMA, and psilocybin.

The research supporting MDMA and psilocybin is profound, and the results are undeniable. I have personally witnessed how these beautiful medicines can have a life-saving impact. MDMA, for instance, is showing exceptional efficacy in treating PTSD by reducing emotional responses to trauma, allowing individuals to process and reframe past experiences. This enables them to heal and regain their ability to function in everyday life. Psilocybin, likewise, is proving to be an invaluable tool for treating conditions such as treatment-resistant depression and anxiety, offering hope to patients who have not found relief through traditional therapies.

Both MDMA and psilocybin have been granted Breakthrough Therapy Designation by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), reflecting the growing scientific consensus around their therapeutic potential. Research from leading institutions worldwide highlights their ability to address mental health challenges such as PTSD, depression, addiction, and end-of-life anxiety—conditions that are often resistant to conventional treatments.

I have seen firsthand how these therapies can transform lives. They are not just treatment options—they are breakthroughs that can save lives. I urge you to support SB1042, as it will provide Hawai'i with an essential pathway to access these therapies safely and legally. We have a responsibility to ensure that our residents have access to these powerful, non-addictive treatments that can bring relief to so many who are suffering.

The mental health crisis is real, and we cannot afford to wait any longer to offer new and innovative solutions. SB1042 will position Hawai'i as a leader in mental health care, allowing our communities to benefit from these life-changing therapies. Please support this important bill and help bring hope and healing to those who need it most.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Chelsea Rorer, MSN, PMHNP-BC, AGACNP-BC



## **Testimony in Support of SB1042**

House Committee on Health | March 14, 2025

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ashley Lukens. For the past 19 years, I have worked as a community organizer and advocate in Hawaii. I received my PhD in Political Science from UH Manoa in 2013. Today, I am writing in strong support of SB 1042, a bill which is the continuation of a now 5 year legislative conversation around therapeutic access to breakthrough therapies in Hawaii.

SB 1042, the Mental Health Emerging Therapies Act creates a dedicated fund to support clinical research, training, and access to innovative treatments for mental health conditions, including funding for FDA-regulated trials and compassionate use programs. It also expands education for professionals, improves patient access through pilot programs and community support services, and mandates annual reporting on program outcomes and recommendations. While it creates a long term receptacle for state funding, I am confident that private sector partners would also contribute to the fund if it is created.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of psychedelic medicine on the brain and body. Breakthrough therapies like psilocybin and MDMA are proving to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. So it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to bring these breakthrough therapies above ground for broader use. Since 2019, Clarity Project has been working closely with the legislators, state officials, Office of Wellness and Resilience and various community doctors and practitioners to understand the current national landscape of psychedelic access programs.

Even with the impending rescheduling of both psilocybin and MDMA, expected in 3-5 years, the Hawaii State Legislature has an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA, and other medicines. Groundbreaking initiatives in favor of these therapies are occurring at all levels of government, private and public research institutions, and throughout mainstream society. Leading examples include Oregon that

launched its Oregon Psilocybin Services with the State's Oregon Health Authority, which licenses & regulates psilocybin for therapeutic use. Colorado voters approved the decriminalization and legal therapeutic use of psilocybin and other psychedelics. Many expect California, Vermont, Washington and New York to follow suit. [Decriminalization of psilocybin](#) and other psychedelics has already been approved in at least 15 counties across 5 states, including California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Washington, and Washington D.C.

SB 1042 builds on these initiatives to provide a funding vehicle to help accelerate patient access. It creates a dedicated fund to support research, training, and access to innovative mental health treatments, including FDA-regulated clinical trials and compassionate use programs. It enhances education by training mental health professionals and expanding public awareness while also developing pilot programs and community services to improve patient access. By investing in research, workforce training, and policy development, Hawaii can lead in advancing evidence-based mental health solutions and reducing barriers to transformative care.

We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities. With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin. Please support this measure by advancing it through this committee today.

Thank you,

Ashley Lukens, PhD  
Founder, Director - Clarity Project



March 13, 2025

Chairman Takayama, Vice Chair Loy, and esteemed members of the Committee,

My name is Martin R. Steele and I am proud to offer testimony on behalf of the Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition in support of Senate bill 1042, an act creating a mental health emerging therapies special fund.

For background, I am a retired Lieutenant General in the U.S. Marine Corps, and I had the privilege of wearing the uniform of a U.S. Marine for nearly 35 years, rising from an enlisted private in 1965 to three-star general, and retiring in 1999 as Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies, and Operations, which is the civilian equivalent of Chief Operating Officer of the Marine Corps. I lived in Honolulu from 1995-1997 where, as a Major General, I served as Strategic Policy and Planning Officer of the J-5, US Pacific Command.

Since retiring from active duty, I have dedicated my career to combating the Veteran mental health and suicide crises. This includes serving as Associate Vice President for Veterans Research and the Executive Director of Military Partnerships at the University of South Florida in Tampa, working with scientists exploring the co-morbidities between traumatic brain injury (TBI) and PTSD; and I was appointed to the VA Commission on Care in 2015, which was established during the Obama Administration to make recommendations about the future of VA health care. I have testified before Congress three times on Veteran suicide prevention.

Our nation's Veterans face a mental health crisis that demands urgent action. Every day, approximately 44 Veterans die by suicide, overdose, or other forms of self-harm. Combat Veterans disproportionately suffer from a complex mix of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and traumatic brain injury (TBI)—conditions that often overlap and significantly increase the risk of suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths by suicide.

Currently, most Veterans with these conditions are prescribed SSRIs or other slow-acting medications, which must be taken daily—often indefinitely. These treatments frequently provide only minimal relief or no relief at all, and many patients experience intolerable side effects. Moreover, there are no FDA-approved medications for TBI, leaving critical gaps in care for Veterans with this debilitating condition.

Fortunately, in recent years, groundbreaking research has resulted in FDA Breakthrough Therapy designations for MDMA-assisted therapy to treat PTSD and three different psilocybin therapies for treatment-resistant depression (TRD) or major depressive disorder (MDD). Recent research out of Stanford University also suggests that **an ibogaine-based treatment** may qualify for a future Breakthrough Therapy designation for TBI—a condition that, as noted, still has no approved medications.

Significantly, the FDA only grants Breakthrough Therapy designations to treatments that have shown potential for *substantial improvement* over existing therapies to treat a serious condition, thereby expediting research and development. Unlike SSRIs, which often take weeks or months to exert their effects, the above referenced therapies are rapid-acting with potential to provide robust and durable therapeutic benefits across various conditions. Evidence suggests that these clinical improvements arise through a combination of enhanced neuroplasticity, moderated fear responses, and profound



psychological insights, allowing Veterans to process trauma and achieve meaningful, long-lasting recovery.

However, despite their incredible promise, these powerful and time- and labor-intensive treatments do not fit neatly into our current mental healthcare system. Clinical trials typically feature:

- Preparation sessions to build rapport and set therapeutic goals;
- Medication administration sessions that may last six hours or more each;
- Integration sessions to help patients process and apply newfound insights.

Such protocols require an interdisciplinary approach, with specialized training for healthcare professionals and sufficient clinical infrastructure.

Additionally, because these therapies involve controlled substances currently classified under Schedule I, research has been significantly limited and underfunded, and few opportunities exist for Veterans to participate in clinical trials or for clinicians to receive necessary training. Further, under the current Right to Try framework, doctors cannot access these investigational drugs to treat patients with terminal or life-threatening conditions, forcing many Veterans—including many members of our own coalition—to leave the country to access these potentially life-saving treatments. While most report **astonishing improvements** from treatments overseas, it is unconscionable that Veterans must go to such lengths to save their own lives.

Even after anticipated FDA approvals, the time and labor-intensive nature of current protocols means that cost, workforce availability, and clinical infrastructure will be major barriers to implementation—particularly within the Veterans' Affairs healthcare system, where early demand is expected to significantly outpace availability. **It is therefore crucial to build infrastructure, train healthcare professionals, develop scalable care models, and secure robust insurance coverage to ensure access for Hawaii's Veterans.** Unlike many medical sectors, we cannot rely on large pharmaceutical companies to drive this process, as they have mostly stayed on the sidelines due to uncertain profitability.

Recognizing the profound potential of these breakthrough therapies, several other states—such as Texas, Connecticut, Illinois, Washington, Arizona, and Maryland—have authorized or begun allocating resources toward Veteran-focused research. Meanwhile, a Georgia Senate Study Committee on Veterans, Mental Health, and Housing recently recommended up to \$5 million in clinical research funding. However, Hawaii now can lead the way with a more robust approach to help its Veterans in both the immediate and long-term.

Given that stakeholder feedback from the Attorney General's office suggests that a Special Fund is not the appropriate vehicle for achieving the desired ends of the legislation, it is my recommendation that the legislature consider amending the bill to utilize a pilot program model. We have seen success from the proposed pivot, most notably in the State of Connecticut, where a Psilocybin Therapy Pilot Program is now up and running, in a partnership between the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Yale University's Department of Psychiatry. By incorporating the proposed change, **S.B. 1042 still takes essential steps to ensure Hawaii is prepared to meet this moment by establishing the Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program, which will:**



- Support **clinical research** into innovative therapies, including FDA-designated Breakthrough Therapies such as MDMA and psilocybin-assisted therapy for PTSD and TRD.
- Fund **public-private partnerships** to advance research and ensure that these therapies are available once approved.
- Provide **training and education** for mental health professionals to prepare them for delivering these therapies safely and effectively.
- Establish **patient access pilot programs** to ensure that those in need, including Veterans, have pathways to care.
- Utilize both **public and philanthropic** contributions.

This legislation represents a bold and necessary step toward addressing the urgent mental health needs of our Veterans. By establishing this fund, advisory council, and ensuring timely state regulatory alignment, Hawaii can become a national leader in providing access to innovative, life-saving treatments for those who have selflessly served our country.

I appreciate your leadership and stand ready to assist in any way I can to ensure the success of this important initiative. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or for further information.

Sincerely,

**Martin R. Steele**

Lieutenant General, US Marine Corps (Retired)

Founder and President

Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition



March 13, 2025

Chairman Takayama, Vice Chair Loy, and members of the Committee,

My name is Jesse MacLachlan, and I am proud to offer testimony in support of SB 1042, an act establishing a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Special Fund.

By way of introduction, I serve as the State Policy and Advocacy Director at Reason for Hope, a non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to combatting the mental health crisis in our country by ensuring safe, affordable, and equitable access to psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. Prior to joining Reason for Hope, I served as a State Representative in the Connecticut State Legislature, where, upon leaving office, I led the advocacy behind the first psilocybin therapy working group within the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The recommendations from that group led to the creation of Connecticut's psychedelic-assisted therapy pilot program, funded by the state and operating out of the Yale Program for Psychedelic Science. This program is now treating Veterans, first responders, and frontline healthcare workers with psilocybin-assisted therapy through an FDA open-label clinical trial. If Hawaii passes SB 1042, similar advancements in research and access could be realized on the islands.

SB 1042 is an essential step in addressing the growing mental health crisis in Hawaii. Traditional treatments for conditions such as PTSD, treatment-resistant depression (TRD), and major depressive disorder (MDD) have not been sufficient for many individuals, particularly our Veterans and first responders. Psychedelic-assisted therapy, including MDMA and psilocybin-assisted treatments, has shown remarkable promise in clinical trials, offering rapid and lasting relief where conventional therapies have failed.

Taking agency, legislative, and Attorney General's office feedback into consideration, I recommend that the bill be amended, replacing the special fund with a pilot program as the mechanism in which to achieve the bill's desired ends. Other states, like Connecticut have successfully stood up a pilot program to support clinical research and access to psilocybin, and if Hawaii were to follow suit, the establishment of a **Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program** will:

- **Support clinical research** into innovative treatments, ensuring Hawaii remains at the forefront of mental health innovation through the use of both public philanthropic contributions.
- **Expand training and education** for mental health professionals, equipping them with the skills necessary to administer these breakthrough therapies safely and effectively.
- **Develop patient access programs**, ensuring that individuals in need—especially Veterans and first responders—can access these life-saving treatments in a responsible, supervised environment.
- **Facilitate public-private partnerships**, enabling collaboration between state agencies, research institutions, and healthcare providers to accelerate the integration of these therapies into mainstream mental healthcare.

Other states have already recognized the value of investing in these treatments. **Texas, Maryland, Connecticut, Washington, and Arizona** have all passed legislation to fund research and expand access to psychedelic-assisted therapy. Now, Hawaii has the opportunity to lead in this space, ensuring that its residents—especially those who have served our country—are not left behind in accessing cutting-edge treatments.

We owe it to our Veterans, first responders, and all those suffering from mental health conditions to provide them with the best possible treatments. By investing in emerging therapies today, we create a future where mental healthcare is more effective, compassionate, and accessible.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB 1042 and help Hawaii become a leader in innovative mental health solutions. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I stand ready to assist in any way to ensure the success of this critical initiative.

Sincerely,

**Jesse MacLachlan**

## **Testimony from VETS (Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions)**

Good afternoon, Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee. On behalf of Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions (VETS), we thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the urgent need for new treatments for veterans struggling with PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

VETS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to end the disproportionate incidence of suicide among American veterans by underwriting treatment grants for Special Operations Forces veterans seeking psychedelic-assisted therapies for PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other mental health conditions. Since 2019, VETS has provided financial and organizational support (including preparation and integration coaching) to nearly 1,000 veterans and veteran spouses through our Foundational Healing Grant program, enabling them to travel outside the U.S. and access life-changing psychedelic-assisted therapies (P-AT). The model and approach pioneered by VETS has been adopted by many other regional, national and international organizations serving military veterans and first responders. These veterans, facing limited options within the U.S., are forced to leave the country to seek more effective treatments that are not yet approved by the FDA and thus unavailable through the VA. The need for these treatments is growing, and it is crucial that the U.S. makes these therapies accessible to meet the mental health needs of our veteran community.

The veteran mental health crisis has reached staggering proportions. Since 2001, over 125,000 veterans have died by suicide, and 29% of Global War on Terrorism veterans are known to suffer from PTSD. The disproportionate incidence of PTSD among veterans is also a driver of the disproportionate incidence of suicide among them. We lose no less than 17 and by some estimates as many as 44 U.S. veterans to suicide *every day*, at nearly double the rate of non-veteran Americans lost to suicide each year.<sup>1</sup> This urgent crisis necessitates swift action to explore and develop novel treatments for PTSD.

Thus, in addition to providing SOF veterans with treatment grants, VETS supports the development of FDA-approved P-ATs by assisting researchers engaged in clinical studies, as well as engaging in advocacy at the state and federal levels for laws and public policies that expedite the availability of these treatments.

Existing treatments for PTSD, such as antidepressants and therapy, often fall short for many veterans. These conventional treatments provide limited relief and rarely address

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<sup>1</sup> "44 Veteran Suicides a Day – What We're Doing isn't Working, Alternative Treatments are Needed!" Special Operations Association of America, June 30, 2023, <https://soaa.org/44-veteran-suicides-daily/>. Accessed 20 September 2024.

the root causes of PTSD. As a result, far too many veterans continue to suffer without effective care. As clinicians studying current treatments have observed, “the only FDA-approved drugs for the treatment of PTSD are the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) sertraline (Zoloft, Pfizer) and paroxetine HCl (Paxil, GlaxoSmithKline)... Although SSRIs are associated with an overall response rate of approximately 60% in patients with PTSD, only 20% to 30% of patients achieve complete remission.”<sup>2</sup> The inadequacy of these treatments is a driving force behind the need to explore alternative therapies that offer veterans real hope.

VETS believes that P-AT can help lay the foundation for further healing, and that future FDA-approved P-ATs will bring revolutionary advances in the treatment of PTSD after decades of reliance on SSRIs—one that has the potential to save the lives of countless veterans (as well as other Americans) that might otherwise struggle with PTSD and lose their lives to suicide. Fortunately, we are seeing significant progress in the field of psychedelic research. Both MDMA and psilocybin have been designated Breakthrough Therapies by the FDA and are currently undergoing Phase 3 trials. The data is compelling—MDMA-assisted therapy has demonstrated that nearly two-thirds of participants no longer meet the criteria for PTSD after treatment. These therapies offer a level of effectiveness that traditional treatments cannot match, but we must continue to push for more research to ensure they become widely available.

Several states have made significant progress in advancing psychedelic research, setting a crucial policy precedent. Texas was the first state to establish public funding for a psilocybin trial to treat veterans with PTSD through HB 1802, allocating \$2.2 million. Connecticut created a Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Pilot Program funded with \$1 million, targeting veterans, first responders, and healthcare workers. Maryland established the PTSD & TBI Alternative Therapies Fund, with \$1 million allocated for researching psychedelic treatments for veterans. Arizona approved \$5 million in funding for psilocybin research through a grant program prioritizing veterans and underserved communities. Illinois has also appropriated \$5 million for a pilot program offering psilocybin therapies to veterans and military families.

Last year, a Senate Study Committee in Georgia recommended a state appropriation of \$5 million be allocated for research on psychedelic therapies including MDMA and psilocybin therapies for PTS, TBI, and other mental health conditions affecting veterans. It’s important to recognize that this is not a red state or blue state issue. This is an American issue. Veterans from all walks of life have sacrificed for our country, and it’s our responsibility to ensure they have access to the best possible care as expeditiously

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander W., *Pharmacotherapy for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder In Combat Veterans: Focus on Antidepressants and Atypical Antipsychotic Agents*. P T. 2012 Jan;37(1):32-8. PMID: 22346334; PMCID: PMC3278188. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3278188/>)

as we can provide it. The legislation in Texas, for example, passed with near-unanimous support and was championed by former Governor and Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, demonstrating that this issue transcends political lines.

While other states have taken important steps, Hawaii has the opportunity to take the next giant leap in psychedelic leadership. By making a larger investment and designing a more ambitious program, Hawaii could move beyond the foundational steps laid by Texas and other states. This would be a bold initiative—one that ensures veterans can access these therapies now while also contributing to the broader national conversation on how to best integrate psychedelic treatments into our healthcare system. Hawaii could lead the way, setting a precedent for the future of psychedelic medicine.

Our government sent a generation to war, and now it is our duty to care for the invisible wounds they carry home. After two decades of sustained combat, our veterans deserve the best possible care. It is imperative that our state and federal governments act expeditiously to provide access to therapies that can truly heal their wounds and save their lives. We urge Hawaii to join other states leading the way on advancing veteran health care, by investing in psychedelic research and treatments for mental health.

Thank you.



HAWAI'I HEALTH &  
HARM REDUCTION CENTER

677 Ala Moana Blvd, Ste 226  
Honolulu, HI 96813

(808) 521-2437

[www.hhhrc.org](http://www.hhhrc.org)

*"Reducing harm,  
promoting health,  
creating wellness, and  
fighting stigma  
in Hawai'i and  
the Pacific."*

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1042, SD 1

TO: Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, & HLT Committee

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, Policy & Advancement Manager

DATE: March 14, 2025 (9:00 AM)

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Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) strongly supports SB 1042, SD 1, which establishes and appropriates moneys for a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Special Fund.

Moneys in the special fund would be used to support clinical research and the development of emerging therapies for the treatment of mental health and behavioral health disorders. Uses would include the establishment of public-private partnerships to jointly fund phase three clinical trials of "breakthrough therapies" designed by the federal Food and Drug Administration, funding of education and training opportunities for mental health professionals, and support of public education and harm reduction.

HHHRC Executive Director Heather Lusk and I served on the Breakthrough Therapies Task Force with the Office of Wellness and Resilience to explore ways to improve the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depressive disorder in Hawai'i. This bill would create a research-driven infrastructure of care that could benefit many residents of our state who struggle with serious and long-term mental health conditions, as well as those who are nearing their end of life.

HHHRC's mission is to reduce harm, promote health, create wellness, and fight stigma in Hawai'i and the Pacific. We work with many individuals impacted by poverty, housing instability, and other social determinants of health. Many have behavioral health problems, including those related to substance use and mental health conditions, and have also been deeply impacted by trauma related to histories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:31:39 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roberto Viernes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senators,

I am writing you in favor of SB1042 in order to fund Emerging Therapies in the state of Hawai'i. I personally know several friends and family members who have benefited from plant medicine. The potential for healing is immense! And I encourage you to fund this movement in order to help our loved ones with mental health.

Mahalo

Roberto Viernes

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:43:46 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Heithaus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,**

**My name is Brian, I live in Honolulu and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to these life unlocking therapies.**

**I personally have seen individuals close to me who have been traumatized by their unimaginable experiences serving our country in war. Now, even given all of the recent evidence of these therapies PTSD healing possibilities, they are blocked from having safe access to them because of outdated laws.**

**Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.**

**States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are**

**paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

**With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.**

**Mahalo,  
Brian**

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 5:03:07 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rick Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Rick Davis, I live in Kailua Kona and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to these important medicines.

For years I experienced treatment-resistant anxiety and depression. Three years ago I experienced the healing power of MDMA and psilocybin in a therapeutic setting. I followed up with ketamine treatments. The therapeutic use of plant-based medicine has completely changed my life in the most positive ways imaginable. The results have been so profound that family members, seeing how I grew, have also sought treatment with impressive results.

These medicines are not magic pills. In my experience, it is essential to thoughtfully prepare, work with an experienced and trained facilitator, create an appropriate “set and setting,” and integrate the experience with post-treatment therapy. I am fortunate to have the resources to do this, but today most of our fellow citizens do not. What if we could reduce the unnecessary anxiety and depression in Hawai’i by expanding access to these medicines to people in need, no matter their financial circumstances?

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo nui loa,

Rick Davis

Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:23:04 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia moritz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is julia moritz, I live in kailua and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to alternative therapies to help with mental health which is in an absolute crisis. I have been a paramedic for 15 years, now working in kailua and Honolulu and have first hand experience with this crisis. I see everyday treatment resistant mental health conditions which could benefit from alternative therapies, we have such a duty to support the mental health of our people. Plant medicines on many cultures have provided many many benefits both physical and mental as an adjunct to western therapies. Myself and co workers would also further benefit from these therapies in the setting of PTSD, depression and dealing with the immense mental weight of working in EMS, Law, or our veterans. We owe our patients, community members and ourselves access to any and all highly promising treatments available. I also honor and acknowledge the use of plant medicines in native Hawaiian culture and ancient practices. Many plant medicines today may not be of local ancient practice, but many have been used for thousands of years by other cultures with incredible results. I believe no plants should be illegal, and our western medicine has a place along side ancient or alternative therapies.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai‘i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai‘i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:37:01 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Mallini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Lori Mallini, I live in Kailua and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai‘i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

Lori Mallini

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 7:55:03 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Vaughan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

This is written as support for breakthrough therapies based on personal experience as a military spouse. Breakthrough therapy was the only therapy that made the initial "dent" in the severe depression and suicidality. It appeared to lighten the load and allowed for next step therapies to take affect and it also gave hope that symptoms could be reset. The breakthrough therapy provided an improved baseline for moving forward with follow-up therapy.

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 8:18:55 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn Wakukawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)**

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Dawn Wakukawa, I live in Honolulu and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to

I have benefitted from the use of ketamine for my mental health. Although it is beneficial, the effects only last up to a few days. Research has shown that other therapeutics such as psilocybin have longer-lasting effects. Many people have been able to stop their use of pharmaceutical antidepressants after using psilocybin.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. **If passed, Hawai‘i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai‘i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

Dawn Wakukawa

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 8:40:21 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Martin	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is Dr. Robin Martin, I am an assistant clinical professor with the department of psychiatry at JABSOM and and a board certified psychiatrist serving the people of Hawaii, and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**. This bill would pave the way for safe patient access to new treatments that are desperately needed in the state of Hawaii.

In my profession I am on the front lines of addressing the mental health crisis, but you do not have to look far to appreciate the unmet need for new treatments. Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide and suicide the leading cause of death in the youth of Hawaii. PTSD is estimated to impact 5% of the population with women and veterans particularly impacted. In many cases, conventional medications and therapies do not work.

There are important and promising new therapeutics being developed, such as MDMA and psilocybin assisted psychotherapy that have demonstrated 2/3 cure rate of PTSD and major depressive disorder, respectively.

I have undergone specialized training in these treatments and believe they could be used safely and effectively in Hawaii.

Please support this bill and help bring these innovate treatments to the people that need them the most.

Mahalo,

Robin Martin

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 9:39:19 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Breanna Crenshaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

My name is Breanna Crenshaw. I am the spouse of an Army SOF Veteran and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I am in support of SB1042. My written testimony follows in the words below, although the profound and limitless impact of Psychedelic Assisted Therapy can hardly be scribed. I began my social work career in 2014 and quickly entered into trauma treatment and crisis intervention. I have worked in various settings with individuals and groups ranging from domestic violence, end of life support, and with veterans who were identified as high risk for completing suicide. I have witnessed the impact of trauma on the mind, body, and spirit.

A majority of evidenced based therapeutic approaches and medical interventions attempt to separate these three areas of need and therefore leave the person only partially healed at best. Psychedelic Assisted Therapy and the safe use of these sacred medicines works to integrate the person's entire being and experience to access deeper levels of processing and healing. The result is incomparable to other treatments and has far exceeded the benefits that I've witnessed with other modalities such as psychotherapy therapy, EMDR, SGB, and hormone replacement.

After enduring vicarious trauma through my husband's childhood and military experiences, I became misaligned from my own individual wellness and my mental health suffered significantly. I battled with suicidal ideations and isolation from my support network. Feelings of helplessness and resentment were rampant and deteriorating the marriage. While my husband's mental health rapidly declined, my own anxiety and depression increased. My coping strategies

were minimally effective whilst trying to manage my first pregnancy and eventually becoming a new mother. Like many, our family turned to Psychedelic Assisted Therapy out of desperation. We had to travel outside of the country in order to legally and safely access treatment, take time off of work, and arrange for child care. I can confidently say these medicines are life saving and invaluable. Our family went from a state of almost constant crisis with moments of reprieve (typically with bandaid approaches, substances, or simply fatigue from the cycle of emotional turmoil) to a state of mutual respect, compassion, clarity, and freedom from our vices). Suicide is no longer a thought for either my husband or myself. We are better people, partners, and parents. In my personal life and career I have been made keenly aware of the unique struggles that

service members and their families endure, and the suicide epidemic plaguing the veteran community. In my current role as Director of Women's Programs at a veteran non profit supporting these treatments, I aid in reviewing hundreds of applications from veterans and their spouses who are fighting for their lives and pleading for relief from their symptoms. I quickly identify that each of these individuals deserves access to these healing methodologies and that funding and access is extremely limited. It often feels like I am choosing who lives or dies with the approval or decline of an application.

Science and personal testimony have displayed the life changing impact of these treatments for many years, and for many years before that these medicines have been used in ceremony to offer healing for individuals in deep need. Our veterans and their families deserve access to effective treatments in the country that they served, and in settings that will preserve the safety and integrity of both the medicine and the vulnerable person seeking assistance. We have a duty to care for those who have sacrificed themselves to protect our freedom, and a general duty to take care of one another throughout the human experience. In the words of George Eliot, "What do

we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 9:49:30 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christina braddock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christina N. Braddock. I am a resident, a business and property owner, a Nurse Practitioner here in Hawai‘i, a veteran with eight years of active duty in the U.S. Army, and a full-time caregiver to my spouse, who sustained a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI). As a former combat trauma nurse, I was prepared for the realities of war overseas—but I was not prepared for the war I faced at home, a war *even more* devastating and insidious.

One year after returning from Afghanistan, while serving as the lead trauma nurse at Tripler Army Medical Center, my husband was struck by a tow truck carrying a semi-refrigerator truck while stopped at a red light on the Likelike Highway. He was left with **catastrophic injuries** that changed our lives *forever*. What has followed has been an ongoing grueling five-year+ journey as his primary caregiver, navigating a fragmented healthcare system that continuously failed us. We traveled across the mainland seeking proper care, only to find that even at the nation's top hospitals, no provider truly understood the complexity of his condition or offered real hope. He is unable to walk, no clear speech, cannot use his left arm, has anger and depression issues, and the list goes on. What it has done to my family is something I will never be able to fully accept, brain injury and post traumatic stress destroys families, it takes countless lives, and it is the elephant in the room no one is talking about. Trauma is real and it is time we begin to better understand it.

Trauma gets stored in the body through a complex interplay of the nervous system, brain, and physiological responses. When a person experiences a traumatic event, the body shifts into a fight, flight, or freeze response, flooding the system with stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. If the trauma is not properly processed, the body remains in a state of hypervigilance, and the unprocessed emotions become "trapped" in the nervous system, muscles, and fascia. This can manifest as chronic pain, tension, digestive issues, or autoimmune disorders. The brain's limbic system, particularly the amygdala and hippocampus, plays a key role in encoding traumatic memories, sometimes bypassing rational processing in the prefrontal cortex, making the trauma feel ever-present. Somatic therapies, breathwork, and trauma-informed care help release these stored experiences, allowing the body to regulate and heal.

It was this desperate need for better solutions that led me to become an Integrative Family Nurse Practitioner—to not only help my husband but to support others left feeling hopeless and abandoned. Beyond his physical impairments—his inability to walk, the loss of use of his left

arm, his speech difficulties, and his memory loss—the most devastating consequences of TBI are the emotional and psychological wounds: anger, violence, addiction, emotional instability, confusion, irritability, and above all, Post-Traumatic Stress. These conditions do not just affect individuals; they ravage families, break relationships, and push people to their limits.

The number one cause of death for individuals with TBI is not the long list of secondary and tertiary complications. It is **suicide**. The emotional and cognitive toll is so overwhelming that, for many, it feels like the only escape.

This is why we must act. This is why breakthrough therapies—psychedelic-assisted therapy, medical cannabis, ketamine, and other emerging treatments—are not just alternatives but necessities. Our conventional treatments are not enough. I have seen firsthand how these innovative therapies can restore lives. After years of searching for answers, my husband and I had to leave the country to access treatments like ibogaine, psilocybin, and ***ketamine-assisted therapy***. These medicines saved **both** our lives. They allowed us to reclaim a sense of self, of purpose, of healing.

I have since pursued rigorous training in psychedelic-assisted therapy, completing a year-long intensive research and education program through the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. The medical community is recognizing what many indigenous cultures have known for centuries—these treatments work. Major institutions, including Johns Hopkins, NYU, and the VA, are leading research that shows psychedelic therapy can dramatically reduce PTSD, depression, and suicidality in veterans and trauma survivors. These therapies must be accessible here in Hawai‘i.

The statistics on veteran suicide are staggering. The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that 17 to 22 veterans die by suicide every day, but independent analyses suggest that number is closer to 50 per day when accounting for overdoses and high-risk behaviors. These are not just numbers. They are my friends, my battle buddies, my neighbors, my patients. I have lost too many to suicide, overdoses, and preventable tragedies due to a lack of effective mental health care. **One is too many. Fifty a day is a national crisis. Please note, this number does not even include our civilian population. 1 in 4 healthy adults have a mental health condition, 1 in 4 children included, 1 in 2 military children.**

But it’s not just veterans. This crisis extends to our kupuna, our keiki, and our communities devastated by trauma, including the survivors of the Maui wildfires. As a first responder to the Lahaina disaster, I witnessed war-like trauma—people losing everything in an instant. The emotional wounds are just as severe as the physical ones, and our current mental health infrastructure is not enough. We need better options. We need MORE options. The Lahaina Engine 3 has already lost individuals to suicide, even BEFORE the fires, now they are struggling tremendously seeking alternative therapies that may or may not be approved, in a desperate attempt to save themselves. We NEED to do better. We need to get access for healing this generational trauma that is inevitable to this population for what they all witnessed, it will forever be stored in their body, because the body does KEEP the score, and this eventually leads to dysfunction, disease, and crisis.

Hawai‘i must take action. We **must** invest in research, in training, and in access to these life-saving treatments. We cannot afford to continue forcing our residents—our veterans, our first responders, our families—to leave their homeland in search of healing. We have an opportunity to lead, to bring cutting-edge, evidence-based therapies to our islands, to offer **hope where none exists**.

I urge you to support legislative efforts to expand access to psychedelic-assisted therapy and other breakthrough mental health treatments in Hawai‘i. **We owe it to our veterans.** We owe it to our communities. We owe it to the thousands suffering in silence. **It is time to stop the preventable deaths. It is time to bring real healing home.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With deep hope,

Christina N. Braddock, APRN, MSN, CEN, CPTR, FNP-BC  
Family Nurse Practitioner, Combat Veteran, Traumatic Brain  
Injury Caregiver, MAPS Psychedelic Provider, and Advocate  
808-212-992

My name is Brandon Bryan, I live in Tyler, Texas and I am writing in strong support of SB1042 to establish funds to support breakthrough mental health therapies. Psychedelic medicine has saved my life and I believe it has the capability to help so many others.

As a veteran, I've spent numerous years fighting the demons in my head alone. I drank myself to sleep most nights after my deployment to Iraq in 2008. Physically, I came home, but mentally and spiritually, something had shifted in me, and it wasn't for the best. I was full of rage, anger, hate, resentment, and trauma built up since childhood, but it made me good at my job and it was praised. Even though I was in this Brotherhood, there weren't many that I could confide in due to the stigma of being considered weak. I was completely overwhelmed with guilt, shame, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

After drinking the symptoms away for a decade, the wheels finally came off on March 6, 2018. Leading up to this incident I had three deaths in my family, my ex-wife was threatening to leave me, and I had sustained a traumatic brain injury the month before. My life was in complete chaos and turmoil. I found myself in a Xanax- and alcohol-induced flashback, barricading myself in my home. I had a pistol on me and I was going to take my own life in fear the enemy would capture me. Luckily in my stupor I called my best friend who also got hold of some guys from the team and our team psychologist. One of my teammates was able to talk to the police officers on scene and deescalate the situation.

From there, I underwent various inpatient treatments for alcohol and drug rehabilitation, Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI). I followed each of those treatment programs to the best of my ability, but I couldn't find complete relief. I was committed to staying alcohol free, I swallowed every pill the doctors threw at me, and was in talk therapy weekly—but I was still ready to end my life.

After four years remaining sober from alcohol and trying all that Western medicine had to offer, on October 1, 2021, one of my Special Warfare Combat Crewman brothers took his own life. I had previously found Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions (VETS) through online searches but was hesitant to apply because I felt that there were guys worse off than me or had more deployments than me; in my mind, I wasn't "that bad." But after my teammate took his own life, I knew I wasn't too far behind him. I applied for a grant and went to Mexico in January 2022. My experience with psychedelic therapy was the single most spiritual experience of my life. It has given me a new lease on life, true love for myself and others, and most importantly, a relationship with the Almighty God. Psychedelic-assisted therapy is not a magic pill, but it was an opportunity to shift my perceptions and work on becoming the best version of myself FOR myself. With the support of trained therapists, I was finally able to reframe my traumatic experiences and find a sense of peace that had long eluded me. The therapy taught me that vulnerability is not a weakness but a strength—a crucial part of healing that allowed me to reconnect with the camaraderie I had missed since leaving the military.

As someone who has walked the line between hope and despair, I am proof that there is another way. Psychedelic-assisted therapy offered me a second chance at life, and I believe it

can do the same for many others. I humbly ask that you support this measure to allow the citizens of Hawaii the opportunity to one day experience the healing that I had to leave this country to receive.

Mahalo,  
Brandon Bryan

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 10:38:51 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tracey Bryan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

My name is Tracey Bryan, I live in Tyler, Texas and I am writing in strong support of SB1042 to establish funds to support breakthrough mental health therapies. I believe that psychedelic therapy is such a breakthrough therapy. It has the potential to not just save lives, but transform people from a shell of a human to a thriving member of our society. I have seen this happen in our own home.

My husband is a 20 year veteran of the United States Navy, 14 of those years spent with Naval Special Warfare as a Special Boat Operator. I have watched him struggle and suffer from the devastating effects of post traumatic stress and multiple traumatic brain injuries sustained during the course of his military career. It is not something I can explain succinctly in a short letter, but the darkness and war that raged inside him was terrifying and all consuming. It permeated every aspect of his life and impacted everyone around him. He was on two SSRIs, two pills for sleeping, alprazolam for anxiety, and then at least 2 different pharmaceuticals for the side effects introduced by the aforementioned prescription medications. This cocktail kept him from extreme depression probably about 50% of the time. However it also kept him from experiencing any joy, happiness or any feelings really, aside from anger. He had given up alcohol and was seeing a therapist regularly. After another teammate took his own life, he decided it was time for a change. We were desperate for some hope. Separately we both went online to research options and both came across the website for Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions (VETS). He filled out an application and was accepted to their program to be able to leave the country to go to a retreat where he would receive the psychedelics ibogaine and 5MeO-DMT.

I have worked as a researcher in a pediatric orthopedic department at a major academic affiliated hospital in Southern California for over 2 decades. While my work has not had me involved in many pharmaceutical trials, I understand the process and the importance of the 4 phases of clinical trials in establishing the safety and efficacy of a medication. It had me very apprehensive that my husband was going to leave the country to ingest medicines that had not yet gone through this rigorous testing. I quickly jumped onto pubmed and was relieved to see that at least some research existed, particularly around ibogaine. I was relieved by the knowledge of the director of the retreat center in answering all of my concerns. But the reality is my husband was on track to end up as a statistic if this retreat did not work, so I put aside my apprehension in hopes that what we were hearing had worked for so many other veterans would work for him.

My husband went to Mexico in January of 2022 for his psychedelic retreat. Immediately, his night sweats and night terrors ceased. He has been able to stay off all psychotropic and sleep medications. While he can still experience depression and anxiety, it does not go as deep or extreme as it used to and the duration of the episodes are shorter. The cerebral reset that the ibogaine allowed, gave him the clean slate to invest significant time into re-learning how to process and express his emotions in a much healthier way. Relationships that seemed to be irreparably broken were restored, as people could sense within 10 minutes of being with him that he was no longer the same person. He no longer isolates himself, but desires to serve others. He spends much of his time supporting his brothers and sisters who are struggling OR encouraging and celebrating with them on their wins.

After my husband began to get better and I no longer needed to spend my time orchestrating our lives to avoid the various triggers that could set him into a violent spiral, I started to have my own anxieties and traumas surface. Thankfully, VETS offers support for the wives to experience their own retreats. So I also applied for a grant and in 2024 was able to go to Mexico to a facility where I was able to experience the healing impact of psilocybin and 5MeO-DMT. I am no longer captive to the fears and anxieties that were paralyzing and consuming me. Being able to walk freely in my true inheritance has allowed me to become a better human, rest in truth, and walk in hope for the future.

We owe it to the citizens of our country, especially our veterans, to have access to these therapies and the healing that my husband and I (and so many others) have experienced. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway to pave the way for therapeutic access to breakthrough therapies, such as psychedelic medicines, in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Tracey Bryan

Testimony in Support of Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy  
House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session  
12 March 2025

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Michael “Mikey” McKim, and I am a Retired U.S. Army First Sergeant with 20 years of active service, including 16 years in the Special Operations Community. I currently reside in Tennessee and am writing in strong support of expanding access to psychedelic-assisted therapy within the United States so that Veterans and those struggling with severe mental health conditions do not have to leave the country for life-saving treatment.

I served my country with honor during the height of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), yet when I returned home, I faced battles I never expected—post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and a deep disconnection from myself and others. Like many Veterans, I tried traditional treatments—prescription medications, therapy, and unhealthy coping mechanisms—that only numbed the symptoms rather than addressing the root causes of my trauma. I was stuck in survival mode, unable to truly heal.

Everything changed when I had the opportunity to undergo psychedelic-assisted therapy outside of the U.S. Through my treatment, I was able to confront and process my trauma in ways that years of traditional therapy never achieved. These therapies didn’t mask my pain—they helped me reconnect with parts of myself I thought were lost forever. For the first time in decades, I felt peace, self-compassion, and the ability to move forward.

My story is not unique—thousands of Veterans have had similar breakthroughs, yet these treatments remain inaccessible in the U.S.

Over the past two decades, scientific research has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of psychedelic therapies in treating PTSD, depression, and treatment-resistant mental health conditions. In 2017, the FDA designated MDMA and psilocybin as Breakthrough Therapies, recognizing their potential to transform mental health treatment. Studies from Johns Hopkins, MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies), and other leading institutions continuously show that these treatments are safe, non-addictive, and offer profound healing when administered in controlled settings.

However, because these therapies remain federally restricted, Veterans like myself are forced to leave the country for life-saving treatment. We should not have to travel to Mexico, Costa Rica, or other nations to receive healing that should be available at home.

This is not just a medical issue—this is a moral obligation.

Denying these therapies is not just a medical oversight—it is a failure of our duty to care for those who have sacrificed for this country.

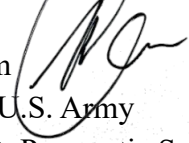
States such as Oregon, Colorado, and Texas have already taken steps to fund research and expand access to these therapies. It is time for the entire country to follow suit.

By supporting psychedelic-assisted therapy, we are not endorsing recreational use—we are advocating for evidence-based, clinical treatments that save lives.

I urge you to support the expansion of psychedelic-assisted therapy in the U.S. This is not just about Veterans—it is about ensuring that all Americans struggling with trauma and mental health conditions have access to safe, evidence-based treatments.

We cannot afford to wait. The lives of countless Americans depend on it.

With Love and Respect,  
Michael “Mikey” McKim  
First Sergeant (Retired), U.S. Army  
Owner/Coach/Consultant, Pragmatic Solutions LLC



**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 5:24:47 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Silva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Jessica Silva, I live in Colorado and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to

I am writing to convey my experiences with both traditional clinical therapies and non-traditional mental health treatments throughout my husband's military career, and how they have affected our family.

My husband served as a Navy SEAL for 27 years. He completed 17 deployments, 14 of which were post-9/11 combat deployments assigned to SEAL Team 6. He sustained multiple traumatic brain injuries, physical injuries, but more subtle...the inevitable moral injuries that accompany being an eye-witness to the atrocities of war. The military was, as usual, more reactive than proactive in the provision of mental health services to their members (non-existent to the families until much later), and very little attention was paid to what sustained exposure to brutal conflict and an increased op-tempo will do to the human psyche. In addition to his personal fight, our entire family was subject to the pain of him being gone for half our kids' lives, as well as the added stress of so many casualties. Our kids were frequently seeing their mom dressed in black every time he deployed, having friends whose dads were never coming home, the news of men they knew dying. During one particular 10-year period, we experienced at least one casualty every time deployed. In 2011, we had front row seats for Extortion 17, losing dozens in one fell

swoop. One morning at 3am, I received a call from a friend in Germany. “What troop is Jason?”, she asked. I didn’t know. She said an entire Chinook had gone down. Well, death notifications weren’t made until after 6am. So I spent the next several hours sitting on the stairs by the door in the dark, waiting for the knock. I didn’t learn until hours later that he was alive. When I heard his voice, I broke. Over time, it took its toll on all of us.

It was a gradual decline, a loss of resilience. It took longer and longer for him to mentally return home, until he just didn’t return anymore. I saw him lose himself slowly, and I was unaware at the time that I was losing myself too. I was helpless in the face of so much loss, an endless stream of it. His self-medication with alcohol was his way to numb, and he paired it with isolation, becoming a shadow even when he was physically present. The member of our family that had been the playful dork, the silly dad, was a reactive, unsmiling specter around whom we all walked on eggshells. I forced couples therapy. For two self admitted over-achievers, we failed spectacularly. He experienced bouts of depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, nightmares, all the hallmarks of PTSD, made worse by another traumatic brain injury in 2008 when a suicide bomber set off his vest which brought down the building and sent fragments into his face, killing 2 other teammates (and the dog). One night when my son was around 8 years old, I had a hard time getting him to bed. He was being a typical silly kid, but I was tired and came downstairs and complained to my husband. He charged upstairs and pulled my son out of bed by his ankle, where he dangled in the air upside down. My son was so scared he peed his pants.

I was a single parent, even when he was home. He was so stuck in fight or flight mode that even a simple interaction would have him physically trying to escape the situation. He would literally exit the room mid-conflict.

My husband was shocked by his own behavior, but was reluctant to utilize the psychologists at the command due to the stigma that was associated with mental health, thinking he was weak, that he would lose his active status, his security clearance, and his credibility. A SEAL’s worst punishment is being taken off the job. The strain showed up in our kids’ behavior as well. My son was born in 2000 so all he knew was wartime. When he entered high school he started cutting himself, his grades declined, and he was getting into trouble. I was barely sleeping, waiting for the phone to ring, for CACO uniforms to show up at my door. When he was home, I worried that I would wake up to a suicide note. This was now YEARS that we were living in survival mode and we were exhausted.

When he retired in 2019, we thought we had won...we “made it”, right? However, the fight for equilibrium lasted far beyond his career. There were many times when divorce was appearing to be the only way for me to survive the storm. Worse was his apathy, he would tell me to just leave. The only reason we are still married today is that neither of us quit on the same day.

The time for ghosts to appear had come. The transition to civilian life is not an easy one for any service member, but it's the closest to hell I've ever been. The effects of trauma have a way of showing up at the worst times, in the worst way. I had ceased to be a wife a long time ago. Now I was a roommate, caretaker, administrator, nurse, whipping post. His rock bottom presented itself in the form of getting arrested for falling asleep drunk in his truck on the side of a mountain highway and having to meet his son's eyes when he picked him up from the Sheriff's office.

The decision for therapy was more of an ultimatum, and so began a different kind of fight. In search of a therapist, my husband encountered new obstacles. We were stuck in the VA healthcare system, a vast and complicated warren of unknowledgeable, uncaring administrators. Providers who were not fluent in the language of the injured warrior changed frequently, and were mostly interested in prescribing medication...lots of it. Appointments were few and far between. They expect people that are secretive by nature of their job, warriors who have never been vulnerable a day in their life, to suddenly want to unpack their years of trauma to a veritable stranger. Well, that's not happening. It's a frustrating and disheartening realization that even the VA doesn't know how the VA works, yet they expect broken, hurting people fresh from decades of war to figure it out. It's no surprise when you hear veterans are blowing their brains out in the VA parking lot. We both realized quickly that medication and sporadic talk therapy were not going to be effective, and continued to feel hopeless.

The entire family was suffering and we knew we were at a breaking point. I can not stress enough the absolute brick wall that is the time of transition to civilian life. Even if you have your whole plan on paper and organized on spreadsheets, you will still feel like you have fallen down a well. So much happened at once; we were no longer allowed to live in base housing, we were having a house built, my father in law died, we both were changing jobs, our kids had left the house, and let's not forget the isolation of COVID lockdown... for someone who is struggling with just regular day to day life, with very little resilience left, this feels insurmountable. After struggling to find appropriate mental health care, my husband started hearing about Ibogaine treatment from other veterans, and we decided to figure out a way to send him to a retreat. It's not cheap, there are questions about its legality, and finding a reputable retreat center was incredibly important for safety reasons. He was able to get a grant from a fellow SEAL's non-profit to a vetted retreat center and we held our breath.

It's not magic, but it felt like it to all of us. He was given some much needed relief, a chance to hit "pause" and catch his breath for long enough to incorporate new skills he was learning through the concurrent integration process. His craving for alcohol was GONE! It's been over 4 years and it is still non-existent. Then I went, too, working with psilocybin. I released years worth of tears, from childhood trauma to hurt from my battered marriage, and the grip of helplessness eased. We were able to reconnect to our core selves, and then each other and begin our parallel paths to becoming fuller versions of ourselves, shedding the layers of guilt, shame,

blame, regret, and pain that had been holding us prisoner for so long. To wake up without the weight of imminent fallout is a gift I never thought I would experience again.

Psychedelic therapy prompted massive post-traumatic growth for our whole family., and the work continues. We are the statistic we always wanted to be...still married after a SOF career. I believe it's only about 6% that can claim that. We are much more present for each other and our kids, and they have noticed the vast difference in us both. They can relax knowing they don't have to worry about us. We are no longer stuck in survival mode. We are not only living, we are thriving. Now my husband is finding purpose in peer mentoring other veterans that seek psychedelic treatment, using the attributes that made him a great warrior on a new mission to forge a path for others in his community. I have furthered my education and am now a certified coach for first responders undergoing psychedelic therapies. It works. If you are willing to face your demons and do the work of forming new habits and practices, and are searching for a more holistic approach to real healing, psychedelics can be an incredible tool. It's attainable, and most importantly, sustainable. No more years of meds or down spiraling. No more melting down. No more thoughts of suicide. Now we focus on living...and thriving.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to

psilocybin in Hawai‘i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

Jessica Silva

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 5:26:08 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J Doe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

21-Year Combat Veteran Who Found Peace Through Psychedelics

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access.

I write this testimony not just as a veteran but as a man who has walked the darkest roads of combat trauma, desperately searching for peace. I share my story in the hope that no other veteran will have to endure the same suffering without access to the healing they deserve.

For 21 years, I served as an Infantryman in the United States Army, completing four combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan—three of them with the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Between 2004 and 2010, I was deployed every other year, my life a cycle of war, loss, and survival. The destruction it wrought on my mind was undeniable.

I have seen war in its most brutal form—engaging in relentless firefights, surviving a devastating IED blast, and standing amid the aftermath of bombings that tore innocent lives apart. I was trained to suppress my emotions, to push forward no matter the cost. And for years, I did just that.

But war does not simply end when the deployments stop. The battles followed me home. The nightmares, the anxiety, the unbearable weight of survivor's guilt—they consumed me. I could not sit in a crowded room without scanning for threats. The sound of fireworks or a slammed door sent my heart racing. I became withdrawn, drowning in alcohol to numb the relentless torment. I told myself I was fine. I wasn't.

Friends urged me to seek help, and eventually, I did. I placed my trust in the military's Mental Health Department, hoping for relief. But what I found instead was a system that failed me. My therapist was more invested in experimental treatments for her research than in truly understanding my pain. My provider handed me prescription after prescription without considering the consequences. Soon, I was on a cocktail of medications that left me hollow—manic one moment, detached the next. The drugs dulled the pain, but they stole the rest of me in the process.

For four years, I fought through therapy, clinging to the hope that something would change. But I remained a shadow of myself, a medicated ghost walking through life. Eventually, the Army medically retired me—not just for my physical injuries, but because my mind had been pushed beyond its limits.

Then, everything changed. A fellow veteran told me about a retreat offering Ayahuasca therapy. At first, I dismissed it. Psychedelic medicine had never been on my radar. But I was desperate—buried under eight prescriptions, trapped in a cycle of despair, and rapidly losing hope. So I went.

For three days, I sat in ceremony, guided by experienced facilitators, embracing meditation, breathwork, and deep self-reflection. I was told that this was not a miracle cure, but a tool—one that could help my brain break free from the trauma that held it hostage. True healing, they said, would be my responsibility in the days and months to come.

The change was almost immediate. At the airport, where I would normally feel suffocated by crowds and noise, I felt calm for the first time in years. Over the next few weeks, I noticed something incredible—I was no longer trapped in a constant state of hyper-vigilance. My mind was clearing, my soul was stirring. Within a month, I cut my medications in half. Within three months, I was off them entirely. Something I once believed impossible had become my reality.

Since then, I have explored additional treatments, including ketamine therapy through the Department of Veterans Affairs, which significantly improved my nightmares and anxiety. Each experience has brought me closer to peace, allowing me to reclaim the life I thought was lost forever.

Today, I am in the best mental and emotional state of my life. I am no longer just surviving—I am living. I have dedicated myself to advocating for these treatments, guiding fellow veterans toward the healing they, too, deserve. Many have experienced the same transformation—stepping away from pharmaceuticals, regaining control, and finding their way home to themselves.

I urge you to pass this bill. No veteran should have to travel to another country to find relief. No one who has sacrificed so much should be denied access to safe, effective treatment. It is time to give our warriors the care they need—the care they have earned.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai‘i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to

psilocybin in Hawai‘i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

MAJ (RET) United States Army

## Testimony in Support of SB1042

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Leif Reynolds, and I am here today to express my strong support for the passage of this bill, which would fund clinical research on psychedelic treatments. This is not just policy to me—it is personal.

I served in the military for eight years, and during that time, I witnessed firsthand the toll that service takes on mental health. I have struggled myself, and I have seen my fellow service members fight battles that no one else could see. Tragically, some of them lost that fight. I have mourned brothers and sisters in uniform who died by suicide, and I cannot help but wonder—had they had access to psychedelic-assisted therapy, would they still be here today? I truly believe they might.

For too long, we have relied on treatments that do not work for everyone. Many who serve and sacrifice for our country come home to find that the available mental health care options are inadequate, ineffective, or riddled with stigma. Meanwhile, we are seeing overwhelming evidence from scientific studies and clinical trials that psychedelic-assisted therapy can be a game-changer, offering healing in ways traditional methods cannot. These therapies have the potential to help those suffering from PTSD, depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders—conditions that have taken too many lives already.

Motivated by my experiences and the urgent need for better solutions, I pursued a degree in psychology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. My passion for this field only grew stronger, and I am now nearing the completion of my Master's degree in Clinical Psychology at Chaminade University here on O'ahu. My goal is to integrate psychedelic treatments into therapy because I believe they allow us to access parts of ourselves that are otherwise unreachable—unlocking healing that has remained out of reach for too many.

Right now, people in Hawai'i who seek psychedelic treatment must travel internationally, facing financial and logistical barriers that make healing inaccessible to those who need it most. By passing this bill, we can change that. We can ensure that groundbreaking treatments are available here at home, providing hope for countless individuals, including veterans, first responders, and many others who have endured trauma.

This bill is not just about research; it is about saving lives. It is about offering hope where there was once only despair. It is about taking action so that fewer families experience the heartbreak of losing someone to a battle they should not have to fight alone.

I urge you to pass this bill, to invest in the future of mental health care, and to help bring healing to those who need it most. Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to making a real difference.

Mahalo,

Leif Reynolds

**Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)**  
House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session  
Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Elena Theofilatos, I live in Pahoia, on the Big Island, and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to

As a psychotherapist (LMSW), I have been encountering people of all walks of life. Many of them turn to therapy only after many years of living in distress. Traditional talk therapies can help those folks but some still go back to their old hurtful patterns of thinking, like deep self-hatred and self-deprecation. It is because such wounds, when they are deep and being passed from generation to generation, do not easily heal with talking story alone. Deep self-blame needs interventions that shift ones' frame of mind so that they can break free from the chains of inferiority and shame they have put themselves into. I was one of them at some point in the past.

I immigrated by myself to the United States in 2010 and had a very rough first 2 years of living there that caused me feeling helpless and hopeless. What saved me then was not therapy (I did not have access to it), but a personal experience with psilocybin mushrooms that I took in a ceremonial way, in a forest by myself. For the first time in months, I remembered what it was like to feel truly joyful and happy again. I felt connected to the nature around me and it was inspiring me to keep living, fighting, surviving. I felt like a child of God that got lost but is deserving of love like everyone else. It was profoundly healing.

I honestly do not know if I could have ever gotten to such a deep healing experience if it was not for psilocybin mushrooms. I was in deep awe and I could see my depression and self-criticism as something that I did not have to carry around. It was exhilarating! I believe that each human, each client of mine possesses this kind of inner intelligence and that psilocybin mushrooms and MDMA can provide people with a way to access it and that talk therapy alone might never do that so effectively.

And if talk therapy would be able to provide such an experience, it can take months or even years. The problem is that we, therapists, do not have many years or months of sessions especially when we treat those suffering from depression. Everytime a client with depression

comes to me, I treat our meeting as if it is our last one. It is because I never know if they decide to come back. And I think so not because I am afraid that I can say or do something wrong that pushes them away. I am confident in my skills as a therapist, but I am not confident in my depressed client's ability to find motivation and hope needed to leave their house and engage with me/the world. Any moment, especially those of them for whom depression has persisted for many years, can decide that there is no point in trying to get better/going to therapy. We need to offer these clients new therapies that can create rapid positive shifts if provided in a well supported therapeutic way.

While I believe that not everyone is a good candidate for psilocybin mushrooms/MDMA therapy, and that ample amount of time needs to be spent on building trust with a client before even considering such therapist to them, I am well aware of clients can feel that therapy is just a waste of time when they are really stuck in a pattern that they have been struggling to shift for a long time. It can drain all hope out of the person and hope is a precious resource that can shift mountains of obstacles. If hope is lost, everything good in therapy follows its suit very quickly. If nothing else psilocybin mushrooms/MDMA therapy can re-ignite one's hope and that brings us half the battle closer to the win!

This is why I am advocating for establishing safe places for people to have journeys with psilocybin mushrooms and MDMA in a supported way so that they do not have to go to the forest like I did. I sometimes wonder how my friends let me do that journey all alone, knowing it was my first time? What if I got hurt physically or needed someone to hold the space for me?

When someone is desperate for healing, like I was then, for them the potential benefits of taking such potent substances outweigh the risks. This is why when we prohibit people utilizing psilocybin mushrooms and MDMA in a therapeutic way legally, they then find a way to do them illegally, exposing themselves to all the dangers of being unsupervised and even, in the worst case scenario, having to deal with the law enforcement while all they wanted to do is to find some light in the end of the tunnel that they have been in.

It is about the time we stop holding people's desire to heal against them and provide safe places and trained people for them.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool

for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. **If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,  
Elena Theofilatos, LMSW

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 6:41:30 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sam Tramonte	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

My name is Sam Tramonte and I live on Maui. There are no words in our language to express the positive impact and lasting positive results from breakthrough therapies, especially with the medicines of MDMA, psilocybin, and ketamine. Our descendants will one day wonder why it took us so long to legalize these gifts when we could have done so sooner and helped our fellow humans to heal, move away from addictions, be more complete individuals, and access the vibrancy from within that these medicines afford us.

Navigating life in our current society is not always easy. These medicines help one to navigate with better insights, more heart, a more direct connection to a higher power, and teach us how to be more loving, gentle, humble, and well rounded individuals who act from a place of integrity and heart.

Withholding the research and access to our community is withholding progress to all of what we love. I hope and pray there is an opening so that all of our relations get to benefit from what these medicines and these expert practitioners have to offer. It is past time. There has been enough suffering.

My vote is for us to grow into the next evolution of homo sapiens so we can get closer to our self defined designation of being wise(sapiens). A wise choice is to make healing more readily available to all. The proof is there. It has always been there, with some of these medicines for millennia. Our descendants are counting on us.

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 6:49:53 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristina Rodriguez	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)****House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session****Friday March 14 | 9:00am****Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,**

**My name is Kristina Rodriguez, I live in Maui County and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to life saving medicines.**

**As a registered nurse specializing in psychedelic-assisted therapy and education, I have witnessed firsthand the profound healing potential of plant medicines and psychedelics. Backed by emerging research, these substances offer a powerful, evidence-based approach to addressing mental health conditions often where conventional treatments fall short. While the medicines in question for research funding are considered “emerging” and “breakthrough” therapies, science is only now substantiating what indigenous communities have known for millennia. Even MDMA has been used therapeutically since the early 1900s. Personally, my own experiences with psychedelics have deepened my empathy, expanded my resilience, and allowed me to process past trauma in ways traditional therapy never could. With proper education, regulation, and medical oversight, psychedelic medicines can revolutionize mental healthcare, providing hope and healing to countless individuals in need.**

**Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD**

**respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.**

**States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

**With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.**

**Mahalo,**

**Kristina Marie Rodriguez, RN-BSN, CPTR, IFMCP**

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 11:13:07 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jasmine Gatdula	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Jasmine Gatdula, and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. I have lived with depression and anxiety all my life, and it got worse after giving birth to my child. I have never felt more isolated, invaluable, fearful, rejected, and disconnected from people I love until my postpartum days. I've been through years of psychotherapy and EMDR therapy and could process my trauma rationally, but couldn't access true emotional healing. I thought I would be broken forever and was afraid that I would live the entirety of my life never experiencing contentment. When I finally received ketamine therapy the summer of last year, I fundamentally changed. After the first session, I was confronted with all the emotions I had suppressed since childhood and saw the person I had shamefully locked away. I was completely emotionally connected to my grief and was unapologetic about it, crying freely and feeling immense compassion for myself. With just two more ketamine sessions and the accompanying integrated psychotherapy, I felt genuine love for myself and forgiveness for the things that I used to think I could never move past. I felt I had intrinsic value. I found the capacity to carry pain and be open to happiness. I felt renewed in my role as a mother and greater satisfaction with life. It's incredible to me that I could connect with my grief at the source and experience healing that for years was inaccessible to me through talk therapy alone.

While I recognize the value of anti-depressants to other people's mental health and wellbeing, I truly feel like my brain has changed for good without dependency on daily medication. More often than not I am conscious of when I am suppressing or disconnecting and am tuned in to why I do it, and this new awareness is helping me to attempt healthier choices of dealing with daily stressors. I am a vastly different

and healthier person today than I was pre-katamine treatment, and I believe every person whose trauma is impairing their ability to live a functional life is entitled to the healing that I experienced.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,  
Jasmine Gatdula

## Support of SB1042

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of SB1042, SD1 establishing a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Special Fund under the Department of Health. This measure represents a necessary and forward-thinking step in addressing Hawaii's growing mental health crisis by fostering access to innovative, research-supported treatments that hold the potential to transform lives.

Hawaii continues to experience rising rates of mental health disorders, including treatment-resistant depression, PTSD, anxiety, and substance use disorders. While traditional therapeutic modalities and pharmacological interventions remain vital, they are not sufficient for many individuals who continue to struggle despite receiving standard care. The establishment of a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Special Fund will create an essential mechanism for supporting novel, evidence-based treatments that can provide new hope for patients and families in need.

This measure aligns with growing national and global recognition of psychedelic-assisted therapies, neuromodulation techniques, and other cutting-edge mental health interventions as potentially life-saving treatments. By facilitating research, clinical infrastructure, and patient access to these therapies, SB1042, SD1 strengthens Hawaii's position as a leader in integrative and culturally responsive mental health care.

Furthermore, the funding provided by this bill will allow the Department of Health to implement rigorous safety, training, and oversight protocols, ensuring that emerging therapies are administered responsibly and ethically, with a commitment to community engagement, transparency, and scientific integrity.

I commend the Committee's leadership in recognizing the urgency of expanding treatment options and prioritizing mental health innovation. The passage of SB1042, SD1 will lay the foundation for a more effective, compassionate, and forward-thinking mental health system in Hawaii.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to advance this bill.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.



Matthew Lorin  
Maui Breakthrough Collaborative

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Krista Colton, I live in Clayton, New York and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to psilocybin, MDMA, Ketamine, and other breakthrough therapies.

In August of 2023 I had a life changing opportunity through the VETS program to attend a psilocybin assisted therapy retreat. At the time I couldn't even begin to fathom how drastically this therapy would change my life. At the age of 13 I was groomed by a sexual predator and abused for the next 8 years. Once I finally escaped from that "relationship" I continued to abuse myself for the next 20 years. On the outside I appeared to be a very normal, driven, and "put together" woman. On the inside I was torturing myself through excessive exercise, over-working to prove my worth, choosing unhealthy relationship after unhealthy relationship, and worst of all constantly telling myself the abuse was my fault I told myself I deserve everything bad that happens to me. After two decades of living in a constant state of fight or flight I began to experience unexplained health issues including pre-cervical cancer, debilitating dizzy spells, and any and all gastrointestinal issues. The year of my psilocybin assisted therapy retreat I remember thinking, "I am not going to physically survive much longer".

I had gone to traditional talk therapy for years with different providers prior to the life-changing therapy I received in August of 2023. As beneficial as talk therapy is, it could not help me break the mental loop I was in. Yes, I would cry and talk through my struggles but the mind loves the familiar, the old engrained story we tell ourselves. The grooming and abuse I had experienced over and over for those 8 years kept me locked in a prison made by my own mind. My psilocybin therapy helped me break free of my own repetitive patterns. After 4 days of intense therapy I went home feeling lighter. I had much more work to do but somehow this modality of therapy showed me exactly where to do the work and that I had a choice to change. Tell a new story.

It has been a year and a half since my psilocybin journey. Within that time I have healed my health issues, aligned myself with healthy relationships, and can talk more freely about my sexual abuse without blaming myself for it. As I continue to heal and become the highest version of myself I know that I will eventually educate others about this type of abuse and be a beacon of light for survivors. Expanding access to psilocybin, MDMA, ketamine, and other breakthrough therapies is pivotal in helping people break the patterns that can be detrimental to

their life and in a much shorter time frame than traditional therapy. I will be forever grateful for my psilocybin experience and advocate for safe access for others.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. **If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 12:27:17 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dooraee Shin	Individual	Support	In Person

## Comments:

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Dooraee Shin, I live in Aiea Haina on O‘ahu, and I am testifying in **strong support of SB1042 SD1**. This measure creates a mental health emerging therapies pilot program to begin clinical research and train professionals around emerging therapies and educate the public about harm reduction and mental health awareness.

The movement to create safe, therapeutic access to emerging and breakthrough therapies is one that is growing across cities, states, at a federal level, and within academic and medical institutions. Following in the steps of both Oregon, Colorado, Texas and under guidance from those who helped to design and implement those State programs, the passage of SB1042 would pave the path for our community members who are suffering to finally have legal access to safe, non-addictive, and effective therapeutic options to find the relief they need. These therapies include psilocybin and MDMA, which continue to show groundbreaking efficacy in treating and in some cases even resolving symptoms for depression, addiction, PTSD, anxiety, and more.

In addition to the growing foundation of research showing the safety and efficacy of emerging / breakthrough therapies in treating some of the most common (and difficult-to-treat) mental illnesses, we also see a large number of academic institutions and medical hospitals opening up psychedelic research and healing centers. These include but are not limited to:

1. Yale Program for Psychedelic Science
2. The Johns Hopkins Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research
3. University of California: Berkeley Center for the Science of Psychedelics
4. Massachusetts General Hospital: Center for the Neuroscience of Psychedelics
5. The Center for Psychedelic Medicine at New York University's Department of Psychiatry
6. The Centre for Psychedelic Research at Imperial College in London
7. The Center for Psychedelic Research and Therapy at The University of Texas at Austin's Dell Medical School
8. Mount Sinai Icahn School of Medicine: Center for Psychedelic Psychotherapy and Trauma Research
9. Treatment & Research In Psychedelics program at Pacific Neuroscience Institute

10. University of Wisconsin: Transdisciplinary Center for Research in Psychoactive Substances

Please pass SB1042 so we can adequately conduct research, train professionals, and prepare Hawai'i to offer safe access to these therapeutic options. Mahalo for your consideration of this testimony **in strong support of SB1042.**

Doora Shin

Community Member and Project Manager of Clarity Project

Honolulu, HI

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 5:07:29 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michal C Cohen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,**

My name is Michal Cohen, LCSW, I live in Kaka’ako on Oahu and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to this potent healing modality.

I am a licensed clinical social worker who works in private practice. Prior to establishing my own practice, I worked with both combat veterans and victims of military sexual trauma at the Department of Veterans Affairs, I have extensive knowledge and experience about the challenges people face when they have PTSD. Most of the current treatments for PTSD do not work.

I have lived through the horrific experience of losing a client to suicide. This client was waiting for psilocybin treatment to become legal. His trauma was quite extensive and none of the treatment options we tried worked. He took his own life because the treatment he read about with so much promise, was not legally available to him. People are literally losing their lives because of limited treatment options. Not every one can afford to travel to Mexico for these treatments. We owe it to those suffering from PTSD and depression to offer a treatment that actually works and has been used for centuries for deep healing transformations.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-

life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need.

**If passed, Hawai‘i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities. With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo,

Michal Cohen, LCSW

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 5:48:37 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Goetz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

My name is Ryan Goetz, and I am writing this testimony in support of a bill SB1042. My wife has been personally affected by severe depression for over a decade, and her journey has highlighted the effective of the use of psychedelic therapy. Since meeting my wife in 2013, I have witnessed her struggle with depression, a disease that robs her of hope and ability to lead a normal life. Traditional therapies, including medication and counseling, have been ineffective in alleviating her symptoms, leaving her feeling isolated and without a sense of self-worth. The use of Ketamine therapy, when combined with Semantic therapy, offers a new approach to treating mental health issues. This integrated treatment has shown promise in providing significant improvements where other methods have fallen short. After three sessions of ketamine therapy combined with semantic therapy, my wife has experienced remarkable improvement. For the first time in over a decade, she feels a sense of hope and peace. This treatment has not only enhanced her quality of life but also given her the strength to envision a future free from the shackles of depression. I strongly support this bill because it represents a crucial step toward providing help to the helpless.



## **Testimony in Support of SB 1042 – The Mental Health Emerging Therapies Act**

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Loy, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 1042, a critical piece of legislation that addresses the urgent mental health crisis we are facing in Hawaii and across the nation.

I am the daughter of a US Marine who died by suicide after years of struggling with ineffective treatments. His life – and subsequent death – shaped me personally and professionally. I grew up very aware of the effects of stress and trauma, including war and combat, not only on the individual who experiences those things firsthand, but also the family, friends, and communities that experience so much in parallel. Since the mid-80s when he died, there have been great strides in understanding and treatment of trauma-related concerns; however, available treatments fall significantly short and do not work for many individuals. The focus of my work is on studying and supporting novel, rapid-acting interventions with potential to save lives. I am an expert in the psychoneurobiology of chronic stress pathology – namely posttraumatic stress, suicidality, and related symptom constellations and novel, rapid-acting interventions with potential to provide healing. My research focuses on the fine-grained understanding of the neurobiological and clinical mechanisms underlying psychoplastogens – a class of medications including traditional psychedelic medicines like psilocybin and ibogaine as well as the dissociative anesthetic and antidepressant ketamine - that produce rapid-onset and robust changes in functional brain connectivity or synaptic plasticity. My work and that of others suggests synaptic plasticity is likely the ‘golden key’ for understanding and treating stress- and trauma-related psychiatric conditions. The ultimate goal of my work is to shift treatment paradigms to improved, effective, personalized, and sustainable mental health outcomes that provide a foundation for people to not ‘simply tolerate existence,’ but importantly, to *build lives they truly want to live*.

I now lead a psilocybin-assisted therapy trial for Veterans with PTSD and a trial for Veterans with depression. I have authored multiple recent manuscripts reporting positive outcomes of ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT treatment among Special Operations Forces Veterans and has published widely on studies of ketamine for stress- and trauma-related concerns. I have received honors and funding for my work from premier organizations including the Fulbright Association/US Department of State, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Brain and Behavior Foundation (BBRF), the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), American College for Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP), Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS), and the International Society for Clinical Trials and Methodology (ISCTM).

My primary academic appointment is an Associate Professor at Baylor College of Medicine’s Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, where I serve as the Clinical Director of the Emerge Research Program and Co-Director of the Ethical Legal Implications of Psychedelics in Society (ELPISIS) Program. I also serve as the Director of Research at The Menninger Clinic, a private, non-profit psychiatric institution with a reputation for world-class research and clinical services. Further, I hold an appointment as a Clinical Research Psychologist at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, maintain a faculty appointment at Yale School of Medicine and am a clinician and innovation expert advisor at NPSYT, PLLC. I am a co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer for Reason for Hope ~ Hope for

Reason, a non-profit organization focused on mental health and suicide prevention, specifically through supporting thoughtful policy for safe, equitable and ethical use of psychedelic medicines and assisted therapies. Further, I have served as subject matter expert for TX House Bill 1802 that passed with near unanimous bipartisan support and funds a clinical trial of psilocybin for Veterans with PTSD, which I now lead. I've also served as a subject matter expert for Connecticut's Psilocybin Work Group and was recently appointed to the Illinois Psychedelic Medicine Working Group, both created out of legislative process, as well as testifying in special briefings at the state and federal level in the US, Canada, and Australia on matters relating to thoughtful legislation around psychedelic medicine and assisted therapies.

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The need for **novel mental health interventions has never been more urgent**. Traditional treatments for conditions like treatment-resistant depression (TRD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and major depressive disorder (MDD), as well as associated concerns such as substance misuse and suicidality often take too long to work, are ineffective for many, or come with significant side effects.

Emerging therapies—including **psychedelic-assisted treatments like psilocybin and MDMA—offer a new frontier of hope**. These therapies have been designated by the FDA as **Breakthrough Therapies** due to their potential to provide rapid, robust, and long-lasting relief, particularly for those who have exhausted all other options.

Initially, this bill proposed establishing a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Special Fund to provide crucial resources for advancing clinical research and FDA-regulated phase three trials. However, after discussions with Hawaii government stakeholders, it has become clear that a special fund may not be the most appropriate vehicle to achieve the desired goals of this legislation. Instead, a **pilot program model**—similar to the one successfully implemented in Connecticut—offers a more practical and effective pathway to advancing these therapies. By shifting toward a structured pilot program, we can ensure that research, training, and access initiatives are implemented in a way that aligns with Hawaii's unique legislative and funding landscape. This program would offer critical support for:

1. **Research and Development** – By establishing a **Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program**, this bill will provide crucial resources to advance clinical research and FDA-regulated phase three trials. Public-private partnerships will accelerate our understanding of these treatments and ensure they are developed safely and effectively. As a researcher in this space myself, I am painfully aware of how significant and time consuming the hurdles are and how any lives are lost during these delays in advancing research.
2. **Education and Training** – The bill will ensure mental health professionals receive **specialized training** in these cutting-edge therapies. It also supports **public education initiatives** focused on harm reduction and mental health awareness—critical components for ensuring responsible and effective use. This provides a fantastic solution to a critical gap that exists currently – access to well trained providers that can support these life-saving interventions. By getting ahead of the curve and being proactive in training and education initiatives, HI is setting itself up for success, both before and after FDA approvals.
3. **Patient Access Programs** – This legislation prioritizes **compassionate use programs and patient access pilots** to expand availability for those most in need. Too many individuals are forced to travel out of state or seek underground treatments,

which introduces significant risks. SB 1042 would provide a structured pathway for access in a regulated, evidence-based setting. To me, this is one of the most critical things we can do. We must consider untreated or under-treated stress- and trauma-related mental health concerns are life-threatening conditions, just as we would a cancer diagnosis for example. We must treat these conditions with the same grace and flexibility and access to potentially life-saving treatments, even if they are still experimental.

4. **Legislative Oversight and Accountability** – The bill requires **annual reporting** on funded studies, outcomes, and legislative recommendations. This ensures transparency, accountability, and the ability to adjust strategies based on emerging evidence.

## Why This Matters

Hawaii has the opportunity to be a leader in **advancing mental health innovation and greatly improving – and in many cases saving the lives of Hawaiian citizens**. Other states have already recognized the need for action: Texas, Maryland, Connecticut, and Arizona have all passed similar measures to fund psychedelic-assisted therapy research. SB 1042 allows Hawaii to **join this movement while tailoring solutions to our unique population needs**.

By investing in these emerging treatments, **we are not only transforming lives—we are building capacity, reducing barriers to care, and setting a precedent for responsible mental health innovation that provides a much-needed foundation for people who have struggled so significantly to find healing and build lives they truly want to live**. I urge you to pass SB 1042 and make a bold commitment to **scientifically backed, life-saving mental health interventions**.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions. Please note, I write on behalf of Reason for Hope, the Veterans Mental Health Leadership Coalition, and NPSYT only. While I include my other affiliations, these are for reference only. I am not speaking as a representative of these organizations.

Onward and upward,

Lynnette A. Averill, Ph.D.  
Chief Science Officer, Reason for Hope  
Chief Science Officer, Veterans Mental Health Leadership Coalition

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Associate Professor  
Clinical Director, Emerge Research Program  
Co-Director, Ethical Legal Implications of Psychedelics in Society (ELIPSIS) Program  
Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences  
Neuropsychiatry Division  
Psychology Division  
Baylor College of Medicine

-

Director of Research  
The Menninger Clinic

-

Clinical Research Psychologist  
Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

-  
Owner, Expert Advisor, Psychologist  
NPSYT, PLLC

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 6:42:26 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edith Garcia	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

## Comments:

My name is Edith Garcia, and I am a proud veteran who has served this country for over ten years. Like many of my fellow service members, I have struggled with PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other chronic conditions as a result of my service. Unfortunately, my experiences within the VA healthcare system have compounded my suffering, leading to medical trauma that has only worsened my condition.

Despite my service and sacrifice, I found myself unable to access the care I truly needed within the traditional medical system. In desperation, I sought treatment overseas, where I finally found relief. I am alive today because of those treatments. However, no veteran should have to leave their country or their home state just to receive adequate care. We deserve access to all evidence-based treatment options, especially those showing promise for mental health conditions that disproportionately affect veterans.

This bill (SB1042) is a crucial step forward in addressing this urgent need. By supporting clinical research on emerging therapies—specifically psychedelics— this bill opens the door for innovative treatments that could save lives, reduce suffering, and offer new hope to those struggling with treatment-resistant conditions. The scientific community has already demonstrated the therapeutic potential of psychedelics for PTSD, depression, and anxiety. It is time for Hawai‘i to lead in this field and ensure that our state's veterans, first responders, and all residents have access to safe, regulated, and effective treatments.

As a veteran, I have fought for the freedoms of this nation. Now, I ask you to fight for the freedom to heal—for me, for my fellow veterans, and countless others in need. Please pass SB1042 and support psychedelic research in Hawai‘i.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Edith Garcia  
Navy Veteran  
Hilo, HI

Aloha Committee,

What if there was a path to healing that could transform not just individuals but entire families? This is the promise of psychedelic therapies, and I stand in full support of proposed bill SB 1042.

My name is Erika Manzano. I am a veteran, the spouse of a veteran, and a mother. Throughout my life, I have battled the shadow of depression and PTSD, shaping my existence in profound ways. Yet, in the past four years, I have witnessed a remarkable transformation—first in my husband, next myself and then within our family unit. As well as, in many other veterans and their families seeking solace from their trauma. These therapies unlock a depth of expression that traditional treatments often fail to reach. They foster not only healing for the individual but also create a ripple effect that can mend generational trauma within families. The evolution I have witnessed through these treatments is something one must experience firsthand to comprehend. Even then, it is difficult to find words to adequately describe the profound gift of life that these incredible therapies restore to us.

My struggle with anxiety and depression began at the age of five, when I experienced trauma at the hands of my mother's fiancé. From that moment, every day was overshadowed by an overwhelming sense of fear and worry. Even playtime was tainted by his unwanted presence, transforming my childhood into a realm of distress. Unfortunately, this sense of turmoil persisted even after he was removed from my life, following me into my teenage years and adulthood.

At 19, I joined the Navy, believing it would offer the safety I so desperately craved. However, I quickly realized how naïve I had been. Sexual harassment was a constant during my service, culminating in an instance of rape. When I tried to report the harassment, I found no support, leading me to bury that painful experience deep within. Convinced it was my fault, I absorbed the blame and allowed shame to erode my self-worth.

For years, I believed that my accomplishments—raising three children, maintaining a marriage—somehow shielded me from the impact of my trauma. I thought I was coping better than others because I was not struggling with addiction, I had a successful career and from the outside my marriage looked perfect. Yet I came to realize that by suppressing my pain, I was harming my mental and physical well-being.

In 2021, after 13 years of marriage to my husband Randy, we appeared to have it all, but we were struggling beneath the surface. Randy was battling his own traumas and PTSD, leading me to fear that our relationship could end. Thankfully, he reached out to a veteran friend who introduced him to the transformative power of psychedelics at a treatment retreat in Mexico.

The change I witnessed in Randy after just five days was astounding. He returned calm and reflective, having made profound progress. Inspired by his journey, I began confronting my own traumas. Although I had been experiencing panic attacks, I initially resisted seeking help. Eventually, I traveled to Mexico for my own psychedelic experience in 2022.

Words cannot express how transformative this journey was. It helped me feel deeply for the first time, reconnecting with my children and my emotions. I learned to manage my anxiety in everyday life, a freedom I had not known before. This transformation has positively impacted our family dynamics. Our children, once hesitant to share their feelings, now openly communicate and show vulnerability.

Now, as I support fellow veterans on their own journeys, I see the same hope rekindled in them. Many arrive feeling hopeless, yet leave transformed, eager to embrace life and reconnect with their families.

My personal experiences and those of others emphasize the urgent need for measures like those proposed in SB 1042. I understand the apprehensions surrounding psychedelics, given decades of negative narratives. However, these substances have been used for centuries in traditional ceremonies, and esteemed research institutions are currently investigating their therapeutic potential.

Schools such as Johns Hopkins, Yale, Harvard, and Stanford are at the forefront of this research, exploring the effects of psychedelics on mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and addiction. These studies are vital in recognizing the value of psychedelics in treating mental health issues.

SB 1042 aims to increase the understanding of these therapies by ensuring their safety through studies on best practices for administering medicines, the crucial integration process, and educating those who assist with integration. Additionally, it promotes the use of these therapies within the U.S. Currently, veterans and others must leave their families and country to access these therapies, which adds stress and financial burden—costs that many cannot afford. As a result, individuals often turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as alcohol or drugs, or even consider suicide.

In closing, my journey stands as a testament to the transformative healing potential of psychedelic therapies, igniting hope not only for myself and my family but for countless individuals grappling with trauma. I urge you to approach this bill with a mindset transcending the mere classification of psychedelics as a drug. Rather, consider the profound impact these substances have had on the lives of those who have experienced their restorative powers. Let us shift the focus to the narratives of those who have triumphed over addiction and reclaimed their lives through these revolutionary therapies. Together, we can champion a future where healing is within reach for all who suffer. Support SB 1042.

Erika Manzano

[Erika.Manzano0804@gmail.com](mailto:Erika.Manzano0804@gmail.com)

619-301-9640

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 7:14:45 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Sakamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai‘i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 8:03:48 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randall Manzano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Warmest Aloha Members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Randy Manzano and I live in Iroquois Point, Ewa Beach Hawaii, and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to various therapeutic plant medicines and other modalities currently only being offered overseas or underground.

As a 25yr U.S. Navy Veteran, I spent nearly 17yrs with the Naval Special Operations Forces either in combat, or training for combat operations. As a son of a Vietnam veteran, I know and see now the mental and physical toll combat operations took on my father in my upbringing, as well as my own life with my wife and three children.

Before retiring from the U.S. Navy in 2016 here on Oahu, I started to feel and display symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), resulting in me seeking mental health assistance.

My mental health journey started with 5 weeks of outpatient classes, and weekly check ins with DOD therapist. Although these classes may have educated me, it did nothing to ease my symptoms, nor help me integrate with my wife and children.

Due to ongoing symptoms, I elected to receive the Stellate Ganglion Block shot to help relieve my PTS symptoms. I received a total of 4 shots in a year. Although the therapy relieved some of my symptoms, and gave me time to control my reaction, it was short lived, and my mental health appeared to be getting worse.

I was then selected to go through inpatient care with retired/separated DOD personnel. This was an intense 8 week program. I would say this program led me to believe that I was not ok, and that I needed help. Although I was open to the talk therapy and different ways to manage anger, stress, anxiety and depression, I was not interested in pharmaceuticals to help with the symptoms of PTS.

After retirement in 2016 my symptoms crept back and I sought out help from the VA and VET Center. When I look back at my handling of my health from 2016 to 2021 I can honestly say that I was just holding on, and waiting my time to die. My relationship with my wife and kids became worse, and in 2021 I was ready to disappear. It was ultimately this time when I reached out to a friend for help. I knew my team mates were crossing the border to Mexico to use psychedelic plant Medicines to heal from PTS, TBI, and drug/alcohol addiction. I have never done psychedelics, nor any hard drugs, but had no apprehensions about trying it to save my life and family.

So October 2021 I left for my 4 day trip to Mexico to use Ibogaine and 5MEO-DMT with 5 other service members suffering from PTS and TBI symptoms. To say these plant medicines saved my life would truly be an understatement. Since my treatment, I stopped using tobacco products without intentionally trying to stop. My relationships with family and friends have gotten better. I see, hear and lead life with a different view. Although symptoms of PTS will always be with me, I've learned to manage my mind and body to regulate how my mind affects my actions.

The changes I made in my own life were so profound that in Sept 2022 my wife decided to seek help for her own military related trauma.

The changes both my wife and I have made in our lives because of the access and use of psychedelics has been life altering. We now seek a life of service to others. Since our retreats, we've both served as hosts, support and coaches at AMBIO Life Sciences and The Mission Within for over 70 participants seeking relief. We participate in weekly integration meetings, meditation/mindfulness groups, and Peer to Peer support with veterans and first responders. To serve as witness and see/hear life change in a person in 4 days is without question a blessing. And I look forward to a life serving others to find their true self.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai‘i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities. With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai‘i.

Sent with immense gratitude,

Mahalo,

Randy Manzano

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 8:14:08 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Farmer	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Robert Farmer, I live in Hawai'i Island and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to life saving care.

I am a retired U.S. Army veteran with 22 years of active service many within the special operations community. I did 10 combat deployments as a Special Forces Green Beret. I served on the front lines of war. I was shot 3 times, TBI (traumatic brain injury), multiple herniated discs on my spine, loss of hearing, vision changes, hundreds of exposure to explosives, tinnitus, shattered hip and of course, PTS. I strongly support this bill to expand access to psychedelic assisted therapy. While I served my country for 22 years, I had to travel abroad to access effective care.

I did everything available under the traditional medical model; I left the VA on 13 medications which did nothing more than make me feel like a zombie. I tried countless therapies; music therapy, art therapy, talk therapy, equine therapy, neurofeedback, alpha stim, transcendental meditation, mERt, hyperbaric oxygen treatment, prolonged exposure, emdr - none of which address the trauma. My central nervous system was stuck in fight or flight for 20 years. TWO DECADES. The constant deployments never allowed my body to get out of the sympathetic fight or flight state.

It wasn't until I left the country to access psychedelic medicine that I experienced profound relief, neuroplasticity and healing from my combat trauma. The set and setting and preparation were of utmost importance. The integration continues to this day. It is NOT a magic pill. With

the right therapeutic environment, guidance, support, safe strong container in place I am living proof this works.

Veterans deserves access to this life saving, effective medicine. We should not have to leave the country we served to get real treatments.

My story isn't unique - thousands of veterans have sought out treatments unavailable in the country we served to access healing. Supporting our veterans means advocating for their care, access to care and removing the barriers to that care.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

Robert Farmer

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 8:19:43 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Lillibridge	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Amanda Lillibridge, I live in Honolulu, Hawai'i and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

Outside of the undeniable science that has proven the efficacy of psychedelic breakthrough therapies as effective healing modalities, I can add that my anecdotal experience with the medicine has been nothing short of profound.

These modalities have played a monumental role in my own personal health journey and trauma. I can say without a doubt that I would not have found the hope, perspective shift, or healing from debilitating adolescent trauma without having encountered this medicine.

I urge you to move forward with this initiative because everyone deserves safe access to this incredibly powerful tool in what has been proven to be a broken mental health system. We can empower our community by taking this step toward offering them a safe and equitable spaces to heal.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration - Please support SB1042.

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 8:21:47 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vicky Farmer	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Vicky Farmer. I live on Hawai'i island and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to life saving care.

The rates of suicide amongst servicemembers was recorded at 22 a day for years. A decade or so later, we realize that many states were not even recording suicides among veterans; it is closer to a staggering 50 VETERANS a day. That is an incredible tragedy for those who signed a blank check in service to this country. An untold number of servicemembers have sought lifesaving emerging therapies out of the country to include ibogaine, ayahuasca, psilocybin and more.

The title of my testimony is Ex Tenebris Lux. I am a military spouse but not a deployment spouse. My husband served for 22 years in the Army on the frontlines and during the height of the war. He was a Special Forces Green Beret. I don't think that when he entered the military at the age of 17 he believed he would live to 40. When he got out he left with a dd214 and a handful of medals that represented many of the worst days in his life.

Several years ago we found ourselves in "crisis" if you don't know what that means it means "suicidal." During that time I had thoughts of "will my baby grow up without a father, will I continue this life without my husband?" I believe the statistic after one deployment is 30% chance of having PTS; my husband did 10 combat deployments. That's 300%. The odds were never in his favor. He was an engineer which is a fancy word for blowing things up. His exposure to IEDs, burn pits, heavy weaponry, mass casualties, near misses, being shot several times, losing teammates first to the war, then to the PTS it's no surprise he ended up in crisis. He hid it well, at first. I didn't deal with the waking up screaming due to nightmares or punching holes in the wall, or severe alcoholism, they were more silent symptoms. That also means he

suffered in silence. The military prepared him well for war. They may have brought him back physically but not emotionally or spiritually. He survived the war abroad but almost lost the war at home. He returned severely wounded; mind, body and spirit.

I consider myself lucky. He was open to anything that might help. He left the VA on 13 medications that left him feeling like a zombie; we've tried music therapy, art therapy, talk therapy, equine therapy, neurofeedback, alpha stim, transcendental meditation, mERt, hyperbaric oxygen treatment, prolonged exposure, emdr, I say "we", because we are a team. I was and have always been his fierce advocate. I'm not commenting on the efficacy of these treatments but for him they barely scratched the surface. By the time he was in crisis several years ago articles and studies about psychedelics started appearing in my newsfeed. I can tell you at that point my first thought was "fuck no!" Putting veterans in crisis, especially those who are highly trained on something that makes them hallucinate sounds like a terrible fucking idea.

How uneducated I was at that time! I had very limited understanding of the history of psychedelics and grew up during the DARE era, thank you Nancy. I was very skeptical. After that point I did some research, I learned the history, read study after study, listened to podcast by leading experts... which lead me to finding VETs. We are incredibly grateful for Amber and Marcus Capone who started VETs Solutions. We both applied and were approved as grant recipients to access psychedelic medicine outside of the country. They believe the healing model includes not just the veteran but also the spouses; the foundation of the family. It's not a magic pill, it's a catalyst. It gave him profound relief and neuroplasticity and space to process many of the events he experienced. It is a process. He still had to do integration work. The set, setting and integration was of the utmost importance. As a spouse who wasn't present during deployments my good friend told me "you didn't go to the party but you were stuck cleaning up the mess" - the wives the children we become the collateral damage and we experience secondary pts as a result of their wounds. My husband served his country for 22 years yet had to leave the country to access effective treatment. That's UNACCEPTABLE. The military trained him for war but didn't successfully bring him back.

Generational trauma is real. It is expressed and passed down in our dna something called epigenetics. TRAUMA affects not just the veteran but the entire family. I'm here to tell you that HEALING has the same effect. It has a ripple effect. Generational healing is possible. Veterans deserve access to these life saving treatments. Ex tenebris lux means "out of darkness, there is light". I'm hoping that you will see there is light and hope. This is an opportunity to become a beacon to carry this hope to many underserved high risk populations during this legislative era. Mahalo lui noa for your time and allowing me to share my story.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. If passed, Hawai‘i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai‘i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai‘i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,

Vicky Farmer

## Testimony in Support of **SB1042**

Senate Committee on Health | February 12 @ 1pm

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Josh Sze, I live in Hilo and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to

I am a proud 10-year veteran of the United States Navy. I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which seeks to advance research into the therapeutic potential of psilocybin for mental health conditions. As someone who has personally struggled with PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, I can attest to the life-saving potential of psilocybin therapy.

Like many veterans, I returned home carrying invisible wounds. The treatments available through traditional medicine—SSRIs, mood stabilizers, and talk therapy—failed to provide lasting relief. For years, I struggled under the weight of these conditions, feeling hopeless and isolated. However, my experience with psilocybin was transformative. Under proper guidance and in a controlled setting, it provided me with clarity, relief, and a renewed sense of purpose. The experience helped me process trauma in ways that conventional treatments never could, and ultimately, it saved my life.

I have gone thru psilocybin, ketamine and MDMA treatments. Each one has been extremely beneficial in my healing process. It has opened my eyes to a whole new way of treating mental health issues. It is the reason I am still here and wasn't another victim to the VA medical system. It helped me transform my pain into purpose. I am currently going to school for Psychology so I can one day work with these substances and veterans, I know first hand the benefits of them when used in the proper set and setting.

Many of my fellow veterans are suffering, and too many have lost their battle to mental health conditions. Psilocybin-assisted therapy represents a promising, science-backed option that deserves further study and responsible implementation. I urge the committee to pass this bill and allow the necessary research to continue, offering hope to those who desperately need it.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD

respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

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We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities. With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Josh Sze

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 1:09:48 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TY Cheng	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.

March 14, 2025

Relating to **Mental Health Emerging Therapies Access and Funding**

Aloha Chair Takayama and Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy,

Mahalo for seriously considering this important step forward to honor veterans and save local lives.

Hawaii has the highest concentration of active duty military per capita of any state<sup>1</sup> - even more than Washington DC or Virginia on a per capita basis. Roughly one of every ten Hawaii residents is a veteran.<sup>2</sup>

Over 20 veterans are committing suicide in our country every day. The number of active-duty personnel and veterans who have died by suicide is more than four times the number killed in combat over the past twenty years.<sup>3</sup>

Current treatment modalities stabilize veterans and other local patients so they can minimally function when they are released from the hospital. But relapses are common. These relapses destabilize families, rob patients of hope and set up conditions for suicide. **Current treatments are ‘band-aids’ not cures.**

New treatment modalities show remarkable, long-lasting benefits, all at a fraction of the cost of current treatment.<sup>4</sup>

Veterans and residents deserve an opportunity to participate in this promising research. Many other states are taking similar steps.

Private donors will use this opportunity to help fund research and safe treatment protocols that save local lives. According to MAPS, an organization that has run multiple clinical trials providing veterans immediate access to breakthrough therapies under the guidance of the FDA and their supervising clinicians, the average cost of a clinical trial is \$300,000.

I will personally commit \$250,000 over 5 years to this effort if this bill passes.

With Aloha,

-Michael Mohr, Oahu resident

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<sup>1</sup> [www.security.org](http://www.security.org) – Which States Carry the Highest Military Burden?

<sup>2</sup> same as above

<sup>3</sup> <https://missionrollcall.org/veteran-voices/articles/the-state-of-veteran-suicide/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://vetsolutions.org/research/>

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 4:16:34 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vanessa Torres	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session. Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Vanessa Torres, I live in Pahoehoe and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

As a medically retired Marine who deployed to Iraq and lives with CPTSD, I support this bill based on my lived experience, education, and understanding of current available treatments. I served as a geospatial intelligence analyst, hold both a bachelor's in psychology and an MBA, however it is my lived experience with mental health treatments that makes me an advocate for this bill.

Many veterans seek improvements in their mental health, just to find dead ends with current treatment options. Though Veterans are skilled and motivated to contribute to our community, symptoms of anxiety and depression often hold us back. Therapy has given me valuable breakthroughs, but there are chemical barriers in my brain which therapy alone cannot overcome. Psychiatric medications are not a solution for everyone, and they exacerbated my condition, putting me at risk. Many veterans face this same reality, yet when alternative treatments are restricted, our well-being fails and we fall through the cracks of the medical system.

I am fortunate that I can afford to travel for psychedelic treatment later this year. But after 12 years of service and then continued work with special forces, I shouldn't have to spend my savings on treatments that should be available closer to home. Like many others, I don't seek these treatments because they're trendy; I consider them because studies show real, promising results with fewer side effects than conventional psychiatric medications.

The treatment this bill supports isn't unprecedented—lawmakers once dismissed THC and CBD, yet today, in proper dosages, they help alleviate anxiety and pain. Low-dose THC edibles have improved my sleep and reduced my arthritis pain without addictive issues, significantly improving my overall health without causing negative side effects. Without the quality sleep I achieve using those alternative therapies, I don't believe I'd be here today.

The same can be said for the alternative therapies this bill would allow to be studied. Thoughtful policy always creates ripple effects, and in this case, the outcome will be overwhelmingly positive—for veterans, for our communities, and for the state as a whole.

Mahalo for your time today.

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 4:35:33 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sian Strong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,**

**My name is Sian Strong, I live in Kailua Kona, and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. As a Veteran & commercial boat captain, I've seen too many colleagues medicate their mental health issues with Rx's & alcohol. Both with little success. We need new & better tools.**

**Please pass this bill and send a clear message that Hawaii is not sitting on it's hands while many suffer.**

**Thx**

## Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Friday March 14 | 9:00am

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is **Pamela Menter**, I live in **Waimanalo** and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to

psilocybin, MDMA, ketamine, and/or other breakthrough therapies. As a mental health professional, I have witnessed a great deal of treatment-resistant situations, in which patients have not been helped by traditional treatment approaches and medications that have been available over the past 100 years. More effective help is within reach, with the newer breakthrough therapies, proven to literally change lives for the better by numerous academic research studies and trials.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Initiatives like the passage of Measure 109 in Oregon (2020) and Natural Medicine Health Act in Colorado (2022) are paving the way for people who suffer from treatment-resistant mental health ailments to get the help they need. **If passed, Hawai'i would also join Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, whose legislatures all passed bills funding research and trials for breakthrough therapies between 2021 and 2023.**

With mental health becoming a more present issue in our communities, everyone knows someone who stands to benefit from access to psilocybin, MDMA and other breakthrough therapies. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access to psilocybin in Hawai'i. We do not want the citizens of Hawai'i to miss out on these healing modalities.

Mahalo,  
Pamela Menter, MA, ATR

**SB-1042-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2025 7:59:34 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/14/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hartley Adriana Kohana Cassetta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the HLT Committee,

My name is Hartley, I'm writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to psilocybin, MDMA, ketamine, or other breakthrough therapies.

Research shows that such therapies have provided countless individuals with healing to allow them to return to joy in their lives after traumatic experiences and aid in the treatment of PTSD/CPTSD, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues that many of our communities face. Whether it be personal tragedy, circumstance, or natural disaster, the affects have touched many if not all of our lives as a community. These breakthrough therapies are paving the way for folks to find healing and connection once again or in some cases for the first time. As a trauma-informed state, I believe this bill aligns with Hawai'i's values as we lead the way to demonstrate how important the well-being of communities is to us. Please support SB1042.

Mahalo,

Hartley A Kohana

**Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)**  
Senate Committee on Health

It's a cliché that just before you die, your life flashes before your eyes. My name is Elizabeth Snider and in April 2020, after sustaining two consecutive, life-threatening impacts that knocked me unconscious for more than 10 minutes, I can tell you- my life didn't flash, but it did stop. The impacts I suffered in a car accident resulted in a traumatic brain injury, specifically known as post-concussive syndrome and post-concussive PTSD, which provisionally delayed my reaching professional milestones and disrupted me from meeting my own basic human needs. I was unable to recall memories each morning, from the night before. I went from being a competitive PhD candidate with a minor in statistics, to not being able to spell my own name, write the date in correct order, or count simple math. The injury and lack of successful treatments made it necessary to withdraw my research applications and subsequently prevented me from entering graduate level research until this year. However, the injury did not damage my passion for research. Utilizing the treatments required for my recovery, I retrained myself over the last few years. In the process, I strengthened my commitments and developed deeper insights into the field of developmental psychology and neuroscience where there is clear overlap and undeniable need for expansive research when we combine psychedelics. More than two-thirds of the top 11 leading causes of death in the US are directly and indirectly reducible through the modern research SB 1042 makes possible.

Prior to my injury, after earning my baccalaureate degree and stabilizing financial support for my family, I had applied to graduate programs. Paradoxically, after the accident, when I regained consciousness, I could not recognize my name, no matter how loudly it was shouted. When I regained comprehension of my name, I misspelled it for months. Executive function and cognitive control eluded me. My sympathetic nervous system was failing me. I struggled for more than a month to recall simple details of my identity from before the collision, and I woke up unable to recall each yesterday. My identity seemed an unattainable remnant of who I had been. But terrible as this was, I forged vital connections and insights furthering both my progress and professional goals through modern and experimental medical modalities.

At my core, I am a researcher, and despite medical professionals giving me bleak prognosis, I persisted through experimental medicine and treatments. Although I was initially forced to step away from academic coursework and conventional research work, I regained my cognition and memory through research, self- advocacy and cutting-edge, experimental functional medicine and psychedelic treatment. Each day of those 40 months, I remained a student, learning about conditions and treatments. I remained a researcher, conducting a longitudinal case study on

myself. Every day, I assessed my condition, and identified varying control-group items and experimental conditions within my environment. I utilized my knowledge of research to scour reports in journal articles and cold-call clinics across the U.S. in search of viable treatment options. I devised strategies to obtain services and became an unwavering advocate for myself and others with similar ailments who were in desperate need of new combination treatments and psychedelic treatments. I understood from my previous research experiences that even insignificant findings could be utilized to inform what would work. I remained honest with myself and my care teams in relaying findings, despite my varying emotional states. Whenever doctors advised me to file for disability, I doubled down on research to treat and recover myself. Fueled by hope and new perspectives provided to me by psychedelic treatments and integration and my renewed passion for psychology, I was surviving by my scientific research habits colliding with new treatment modalities and psychedelics.

I discovered training for specialized injury and mental health treatment in a diverse and multi-disciplinary approach to the brain (Vasterling et al., 2012). I received my final functional neurology treatment with a newfound concernment in neuroscience and psychedelics. By learning how to use the neurological mechanisms of action in combination with psychedelics and modern medical treatments, my life was saved when I converted traumatic experiences into strength and recovery, and to advocate, heal and thrive. I identified the necessity to study how neural plasticity occurs beyond the context of particular diagnosis and how psychedelics influence and maximize the healing potential of neurological treatments. How I overcame my own near-death experience and survival-challenges, psychedelics and experimental functional medicine will remain a vital part of societal research and education.

Through intentional metacognitive practices in combination with these alternative modalities, I have fortified my cognitive capacity and emotional stamina to be successful in a multitude of environments including a rigorous graduate school environment. Those I treated with using these modalities also all have notable improvement. My experiences have taught me that research and cutting-edge medical options are not only immediately life-saving, this research is also life-changing, and we are determined to further this science and education for our future generations. My own lived experience originating from, identification with and record of working with underrepresented populations has sharpened my understanding of the absolute necessity for SB1042, now.

In an ever-changing world, the reliable piece I know is that SB1042 will save lives and prevent future harm here, now, in the state of Hawai'i. SB1042 is an asset to this state and Hawai'i citizens as well as far reaching beyond to save lives nationally.

Over the past two decades, researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of breakthrough therapies, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to create access to safe and non-addictive therapies like psilocybin and MDMA for therapeutic uses. Research from major institutions around the world shows psilocybin to be a promising clinical treatment tool for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and more. Similarly, MDMA is showing groundbreaking efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, psilocybin and MDMA are increasingly considered some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD respectively, when administered in clinical settings. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to grant psilocybin and MDMA their Breakthrough Therapy Designation.

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Mahalo,  
Elizabeth Snider

Vasterling, J. J., Bryant, R. A., & Keane, T. M. (2012). *Ptsd and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury*. Guilford Press.