



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 HD1  
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

April 2, 2025, at 3:30 p.m., Room Number: 308

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** S.B. 1042 SD1 HD1, 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 breakthrough therapies such as MDMA and psilocybin. Research continues to provide significant data such therapies, 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.<sup>1 2</sup>

The OWR believes that S.B. 1042 SD 1 HD1 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 closely monitored clinical research.

The OWR requests your committee to consider amendments to extend program authorization provided by this bill, as timelines for contracting, obtaining regulatory approvals, adopting rules if needed, and establishing the programmatic framework for deployment of patient services may require flexibility with uncertain timelines considering likely disruption to federal and other agencies and processes.

In addition, it appears that receiving future private and non-state funding may be likely once program services are established, but for practical purposes, may only be secured with a continued program pathway. Finally, it appears likely additional potential emerging therapies may be approved by the FDA in coming years which may necessitate prudent study through a

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<sup>1</sup> Mithoefer, M. C., Designee, S., Doblin, R., Emerson, A., Mithoefer, A., Jerome, L., Ruse, J., Doblin, R., Gibson, E., Ot'alora, M., & Sola, E. (2017, August 22). *A manual for MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder*. Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. <https://maps.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MDMA-Assisted-Psychotherapy-Treatment-Manual-V8.1-22AUG2017.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Carhart-Harris, R. L., Bolstridge, M., Day, C. M. J., Rucker, J., Watts, R., Erritzoe, D. E., Kaelen, M., Giribaldi, B., Bloomfield, M., Pilling, S., Rickard, J. A., Forbes, B., Feilding, A., Taylor, D., Curran, H. V., & Nutt, D. J. (2018). Psilocybin with psychological support for treatment-resistant depression: Six-month follow-up. *Psychopharmacology*, 235(2), 399-408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-017-4771-x>

program such as this to ensure the development and implementation of appropriate health and legal safeguards, prior to broad public availability.

Below is the summary of the amendments we are requesting to S.B. 1042 SD1 HD1:

- (1) Provide a longer timeline and flexibility by changing the proposed two-year pilot program into a program which the office of wellness and resilience is authorized to establish and implement, as may be appropriate
- (2) Deleting the appropriation section

Proposed changes are attached.

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

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

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

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that addressing the  
2 mental health crisis affecting the residents 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 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

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

4 The legislature also finds that establishing a mental  
5 health emerging therapies project within the office of wellness  
6 and resilience, will enable the State to assess the feasibility,  
7 effectiveness, and accessibility of these cutting-edge therapies  
8 for individuals in Hawaii who could stand to benefit the most.  
9 By investing in evidence-based emerging therapies, the State can  
10 lead the way in expanding mental health care options, improving  
11 health outcomes, and reducing veteran suicide rates.

12 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a  
13 mental health emerging therapies program within the office of  
14 wellness and resilience.

15 SECTION 2. (a) There is established a mental health  
16 emerging therapies program within the office of wellness and  
17 resilience to support clinical research and the development of  
18 emerging therapies for the treatment of mental health and  
19 behavioral health disorders.

20 (b) The program may:

- 1       (1) Establish partnerships with public and private  
2       stakeholders, such as public agencies, academic  
3       institutions, health care providers, or any other as  
4       the office of wellness and resilience may deem  
5       appropriate;
- 6       (2) Fund phase three clinical trials of treatments or  
7       therapies that have received a breakthrough-therapy  
8       designation from the United States Food and Drug  
9       Administration, investor-initiated clinical trials, or  
10      other clinical trials, including trials to:
  - 11      (A) Inform optimal methods of treatment delivery;
  - 12      (B) Inform transdiagnostic safety and efficacy; and
  - 13      (C) Inform patient access, patient support services,  
14      and real world data collection and analysis;
- 15      (3) Fund education and training opportunities for mental  
16      health professionals;
- 17      (4) Support public education and harm reduction;
- 18      (5) Fund implementation studies, including research and  
19      analyses of best practices, cost effectiveness, and  
20      methods to reduce treatment costs; and

1           (6) Provide recommendations for expanding patient access,  
2           patient support services, and other means by which  
3           those with mental health and behavioral health needs  
4           may access emerging therapies.

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

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

11          (e) The office of wellness and resilience shall submit a  
12 report of its activities to the legislature no later than twenty  
13 days prior to the convening of each regular session. Each  
14 report shall include but not be limited to:

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

18          (2) Any findings and recommendations; and

19          (3) Any proposed legislation.

1 (g) For the purposes of this Act, "emerging therapies"  
2 means any psychedelic or entactogenic compound or mixture that  
3 is:

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

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

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

11 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.

**Report Title:**

Mental Health Emerging Therapies Program; Office of Wellness and Resilience

**Description:**

Establishes a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Effective 7/1/3000.  
(HD1)

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





# Aloha Integrative Mental Health

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## Written Testimony in Support of Hawaii SB1042

**Date:** 03/31/2025

**To:** Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN 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 Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1042 (SB1042). While I would be honored to present my testimony in person, my commitment to my patients prevents me from doing so. As a mental healthcare provider, business owner, and resident of Hawai'i, I firmly believe that this bill addresses crucial issues affecting the well-being of our state—especially in light of the significant trauma caused by events such as the Lahaina fires, the shortage of mental health providers, and the overall lack of adequate mental health support in Hawai'i.

Psilocybin and MDMA are emerging as some of the most effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD when administered in clinical settings. Their potential has been so compelling that the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has granted both substances Breakthrough Therapy Designation. Psychedelic-assisted therapy represents a

transformative opportunity to provide comprehensive and effective mental health care, particularly in the following ways:

- **Treatment for Trauma and PTSD:** Clinical trials have demonstrated that psilocybin therapy significantly reduces PTSD symptoms and trauma-related anxiety. Research from the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) has shown that MDMA-assisted therapy is highly effective in treating PTSD. Additionally, psilocybin therapy has been shown to produce lasting benefits with as little as a single dose.
- **Support for Veterans and First Responders:** Veterans and first responders, who are disproportionately affected by PTSD, have experienced profound healing through psilocybin therapy. By addressing the root causes of trauma, this treatment promotes deep emotional healing and long-term symptom reduction.
- **Breakthroughs in Depression Treatment:** Research from Johns Hopkins University has found that psilocybin, when combined with psychotherapy, leads to significant reductions in depressive symptoms. In one study, 67% of participants reported lasting improvements months after a single session. For individuals with treatment-resistant depression, this represents a powerful alternative to traditional antidepressants, which often have limited efficacy and unwanted side effects.
- **Addiction Recovery and Mental Clarity:** Psilocybin therapy has shown promise in treating addiction by fostering profound self-awareness, emotional insight, and a sense of connection with others. By helping individuals address the underlying causes of addiction, psilocybin therapy can serve as a powerful tool in breaking cycles of substance dependence and unhealthy behaviors. (It is important to note that this is not a replacement for addictive behaviors, one session of psychedelic medicine has shown the ability to remove the desire to destroy oneself through addiction).

SB1042 is particularly vital for addressing the urgent need for expanded mental health services in Hawai'i, particularly for individuals impacted by the Lahaina fire, those struggling with treatment-resistant conditions, and those facing addiction. This bill ensures that alternative, evidence-based treatments are available to those who need them most, providing hope and healing where traditional methods have fallen short.

As a psychiatric nurse practitioner, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges our communities face in the aftermath of disasters and personal hardships. The current mental health care system in Hawai'i is overburdened, with a severe lack of providers, limited accessibility to quality care, and conventional treatments that often come with significant side effects. Psychedelic-assisted therapy offers a promising, long-lasting solution that requires fewer treatment sessions while improving patient outcomes.

I am deeply honored to support this bill and to be part of a growing movement in Hawai'i dedicated to expanding access to these life-changing therapies. Many residents are actively educating themselves, obtaining certifications, and preparing for the day when these treatments can be offered safely and legally. In January 2026, a nurse practitioner student from Johns Hopkins with extensive psychedelic training will be coming to precept with me, with hopes of relocating to Hawai'i to assist in the

implementation of psychedelic-assisted therapy. When the time comes, we will be ready with a well-organized, evidence-based, and safe framework for treatment.

States play a critical role in ensuring access to breakthrough mental health treatments. Initiatives such as Oregon's Measure 109 (2020) and Colorado's Natural Medicine Health Act (2022) have paved the way for safe and legal therapeutic use of psilocybin and MDMA. If passed, Hawai'i would join states like Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington, all of which have recently passed legislation funding research and clinical trials for these promising therapies.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support SB1042. This legislation will provide essential resources and support to those in need, strengthen recovery efforts across our state, and promote long-term mental health resilience for the people of Hawai'i. Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to improving the well-being of our residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. L. P. H. V. P. B. C.", followed by the text "ADMINISTRATIVE" in a smaller, less legible font.



**Testimony in Support of SB1042**  
House Committee on Finance | April 2, 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.

**Clarity Project, through our network of donors, can commit \$500,000 in 2025 and 2026 to this initiative. We feel confident, if given more time, we can secure full funding for the project.**

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

## **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.

State investment in psychedelic-assisted therapy research has proven to be a powerful catalyst for broader funding and institutional growth. A prime example is Texas' pioneering legislation, HB 1802, passed in 2021. This bill authorized and funded a clinical trial using psilocybin to treat PTSD in veterans at the Baylor College of Medicine, marking the first instance of state-funded psychedelic research in the nation. Following the passage of HB 1802, philanthropic momentum grew significantly. At the University of Texas at Austin, the Dell Medical School was able to establish the Center for Psychedelic Research and Therapy, supported by millions of dollars in private philanthropic donations. While not structured as matching funds, this sequence underscores a powerful dynamic: when state governments take the lead by legitimizing and funding research, private funders are more likely to follow, investing in the infrastructure, innovation, and treatment pathways that state appropriations help to initiate.

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 advancing psychedelic research and treatments for mental health.

Thank you.





Testimony in Support of SB 1042 – The Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program  
House Committee on Finance  
April 3, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee,

My name is Jesse MacLachlan, and I am proud to offer testimony in support of SB 1042, which establishes a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program.

I serve as the State Policy and Advocacy Director at Reason for Hope, a nonprofit organization focused on addressing the mental health crisis through safe, affordable, and equitable access to psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. Previously, I served as a State Representative in the Connecticut General Assembly, where, upon leaving office, I helped lead the creation of Connecticut's psilocybin therapy working group within the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. This initiative led to the state's first psychedelic-assisted therapy pilot program, which is now operational and delivering psilocybin-assisted therapy to Veterans, first responders, and frontline healthcare workers through an FDA-authorized clinical trial at Yale.

If Hawaii advances SB 1042, similar progress in access and research can be realized here as well.

This legislation is a vital step toward addressing the growing burden of trauma-related mental health conditions, including PTSD, treatment-resistant depression (TRD), and major depressive disorder (MDD)—conditions that disproportionately affect our Veterans and public safety personnel. Psychedelic-assisted therapies, including MDMA and psilocybin, are showing exceptional promise in clinical trials, offering rapid and durable relief where traditional treatments fall short.

By establishing a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program, Hawaii can:

- Support clinical research on FDA-designated Breakthrough Therapies, using both public and philanthropic contributions.
- Expand training and education for mental health professionals, ensuring readiness for future implementation.
- Develop patient access programs, particularly for Veterans, first responders, and others with treatment-resistant conditions.
- Foster public-private partnerships, bringing together state agencies, healthcare institutions, and researchers to coordinate effective rollout.

I want to commend the legislature for wisely including language in SB 1042 that allows for the receipt of private donations. I firmly believe that if the State commits to contributing funding—no matter how modest—the donor community will respond in kind. We have seen this happen in other states and sectors. A strong signal from the State will unlock philanthropic investment and create momentum for success.

Additionally, if an appropriation is not feasible in this budget cycle, I encourage the Committee to consider Connecticut's phased approach. In 2022, Connecticut passed its pilot program without dedicated funding, instead authorizing it within available appropriations. In the following session, the legislature allocated \$1 million over two years. This incremental path allowed for progress without immediate financial burden, while still laying the groundwork for long-term impact.

States like Texas, Maryland, Connecticut, Washington, and Arizona have already taken action to fund research and expand access to psychedelic-assisted therapy. Hawaii now has the opportunity to lead with a pilot model tailored to its unique needs and values.

We owe it to our Veterans, first responders, and all Hawaiians suffering from mental health conditions to pursue the most promising treatments available. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB 1042 and ensure this visionary initiative moves forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions and stand ready to assist in any way to ensure the success of this effort.

Sincerely,  
Jesse MacLachlan  
State Policy and Advocacy Director, Reason for Hope

Testimony in Support of SB 1042  
House Committee on Finance  
April 3, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and 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 strong support of SB 1042, now amended to establish the Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program.

As a retired Lieutenant General in the U.S. Marine Corps, I served nearly 35 years in uniform, rising from an enlisted private to three-star general. From 1995–1997, I was stationed in Honolulu, where I served as Strategic Policy and Planning Officer in the J-5 at U.S. Pacific Command. Hawaii holds a special place in my heart—not only as a duty station, but as a place where I witnessed the strength and sacrifice of Hawaii’s service members firsthand.

Since retiring from active duty, I’ve dedicated my career to combating the Veteran mental health and suicide crises. I’ve served as Executive Director of Military Partnerships and Associate Vice President for Veterans Research at the University of South Florida and was appointed to the VA Commission on Care under the Obama administration. I’ve testified before Congress multiple times on suicide prevention and currently lead the Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition. Veterans across the nation—and here in Hawaii—are facing a mental health crisis that demands urgent action. Every day, approximately 44 Veterans die by suicide, overdose, or other forms of self-harm. Many of these losses stem from complex, overlapping conditions like PTSD, depression, and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Existing treatments, particularly SSRIs, often provide limited relief and must be taken indefinitely. In the case of TBI, no FDA-approved medications currently exist.

SB 1042 is a timely and necessary response to this crisis. The pilot program will:

- Support clinical research into FDA-designated Breakthrough Therapies like MDMA- and psilocybin-assisted therapy for PTSD and treatment-resistant depression (TRD).
- Fund public-private partnerships to ensure these therapies are safely and effectively developed.
- Provide education and training for mental health professionals to deliver these therapies responsibly.
- Establish patient access pilot programs so that Veterans and others in need can receive care in a supervised, regulated setting.

Recent federal and academic research—including from Stanford, Johns Hopkins, and Yale—has shown that these treatments can provide rapid, long-lasting relief, often after just one or two sessions. These therapies act through unique mechanisms such as enhanced neuroplasticity and moderated fear responses, allowing Veterans to process trauma and achieve meaningful healing. Other states—including Texas, Maryland, Connecticut, Illinois, Washington, and Arizona—have recognized the urgency of this moment and funded state-based programs or trials for psychedelic-assisted therapies. Connecticut’s pilot program, implemented in partnership with Yale University, offers a compelling model for Hawaii to follow.

Importantly, these treatments require a new clinical model: preparation sessions, full-day dosing experiences, and post-treatment integration. This requires infrastructure, training, and insurance coverage. Without early action, FDA approvals alone will not ensure access. By acting now, Hawaii can build that foundation.

I also want to commend the legislature for its foresight in including language that allows for philanthropic contributions to support the pilot program. I am confident that your approval of this legislation will result in matching philanthropic funds, as enabled in the bill's language. Based on my experience, philanthropy follows state commitment—not the other way around—and your leadership will signal to donors that Hawaii is serious about addressing this crisis.

I respectfully urge your support to advance this legislation and appropriate funding to operationalize the pilot. This is an investment in lives, families, and communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and commitment to Hawaii's Veterans. I stand ready to assist however I can to ensure the success of this vital initiative.

Respectfully,

*Martin R. Steele*

Martin R. Steele

Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

Founder and President, Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition



March 26, 2025

The Honorable Kyle Yamashita  
Chair, House Finance Committee  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Yamashita,

We write to you to express our strong support for SB 1042 by Senator Chris Lee. This critical legislation is an important step toward addressing the alarming mental health crisis affecting our nation's veterans and ensuring they have access to innovative, evidence-based treatments.

Veterans are one of the most vulnerable populations when it comes to mental health. Since 2001, over 125,000 veterans have died by suicide, and 29% of Global War on Terrorism veterans are known to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (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>

Clearly, current mental health treatment options available to our veterans through VA healthcare facilities have been far from universally effective. Our veterans and their families need access to alternative therapies that address the complexity of the challenges they face following service to our nation. As demonstrated by ongoing medical and scientific research, psychedelic therapies are rapidly emerging as an effective tool in treating PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), treatment-resistant depression, substance use disorder, anxiety, and other mental health indications that fuel disproportionate rates of suicide among the veteran population.

Founded in 2019, Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions (VETS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to end the veteran suicide epidemic by providing resources, research, and advocacy for U.S. military veterans seeking psychedelic-assisted therapies for TBI, PTSD, addiction, and other health conditions. VETS envisions a world where our veterans have access to the most advanced healthcare options to heal from the mental and physical wounds of war. VETS has supported nearly 1,000 U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) veterans and veteran spouses to access psychedelic-assisted therapy (P-AT) treatment abroad, paired with preparation and integration coaching, through our "Foundational Healing Grants" program.

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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.

SB 1042 is a pioneering initiative that establishes a mental health emerging therapies program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. The passage of SB 1042 would place Hawaii at the forefront of veteran mental health innovation, building upon successful initiatives in states like Texas, which passed HB 1802 to fund clinical trials investigating psilocybin for PTSD. With bipartisan support, states across the nation are recognizing the need to act urgently, and Hawaii has a unique opportunity to lead by example with a comprehensive, forward-thinking approach.

We strongly urge the Hawaii House of Representatives to support SB 1042 and take decisive action to advance access to breakthrough therapies for veterans. By enacting this legislation, Hawaii will not only honor its commitment to those who have served but also set a precedent for responsible, research-driven policymaking that could save countless lives.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to our nation's heroes. VETS stands ready to assist in any way possible to support the successful implementation of this vital initiative.

Respectfully,



Amber Capone  
CEO and Co-founder



Marcus Capone  
Board Chair and Co-founder

CC:

Representative Jenna Takenouchi  
Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti  
Representative Daniel Holt  
Representative Ikaika Hussey  
Representative Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa  
Representative Matthias Kusch  
Representative Rachele F. Lamosao  
Representative Mike Lee  
Representative Tyson K. Miyake  
Representative Dee Morikawa  
Representative Shirley Ann Templo  
Representative David Alcos III  
Representative Julie Reyes Oda  
Representative Gene Ward

✉ [info@vetsolutions.org](mailto:info@vetsolutions.org)

📷 [veteransolutions](#)

🖱 [vetsolutions.org](https://vetsolutions.org)



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?"

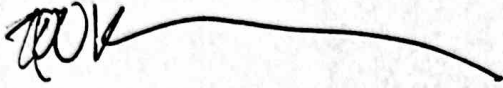
I can only give them disappointing answers.

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 'TCook', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Tom Cook, M.D.

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



**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 4:31:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Umiamaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Strong Support for SB 1042 – Legal Access to Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy

Dear Esteemed Legislators,

My name is Deborah Umiamaka, and I am a U.S. citizen residing in the State of Hawaii. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1042 (SB 1042), which seeks to advance research and access to psychedelic-assisted therapies for mental health conditions. As someone who has suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for much of my life and is currently on disability due to its debilitating effects, I urge you to pass this bill.

Despite years of trying conventional treatments such as psychiatric medications and counseling, I continue to experience symptoms of PTSD. These treatments have provided limited relief, and I have been told that managing my condition is the best I can hope for. However, emerging research on psychedelic-assisted therapies offers a new sense of hope for individuals like me who have not found success with traditional approaches.

## **Scientific Evidence Supporting Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy**

Numerous clinical studies underscore the potential of psychedelic-assisted therapy to revolutionize mental health care:

- **MDMA-Assisted Therapy:** A recent Phase III clinical trial demonstrated that 71.2% of participants with moderate to severe PTSD no longer met diagnostic criteria after treatment with MDMA-assisted therapy. This groundbreaking study also showed an 86.5% clinically meaningful improvement in symptoms, making it one of the most effective treatments ever studied for PTSD.
- **Psilocybin Therapy:** Psilocybin has shown significant promise in alleviating treatment-resistant depression and anxiety, conditions often comorbid with PTSD. Its ability to enhance emotional processing and create new neural connections makes it a powerful tool for addressing trauma.

- **FDA Breakthrough Therapy Designation:** Both MDMA and psilocybin have been designated as "breakthrough therapies" by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), recognizing their potential to provide substantial improvement over existing treatments.

These therapies work by creating a unique state of cognitive flexibility and emotional openness, allowing patients to process trauma more effectively when combined with psychotherapy. Unlike many conventional medications that must be taken daily, psychedelic-assisted therapy often requires only a few supervised sessions to achieve lasting results.

## **Constitutional and Ethical Considerations**

As a resident of Hawaii and a U.S. citizen, I invoke my constitutional right to advocate for access to life-changing medical treatments. The Ninth Amendment protects unenumerated rights, including the pursuit of innovative therapies when conventional options fail. Additionally, the Equal Protection Clause under the Fourteenth Amendment ensures that individuals suffering from treatment-resistant mental health conditions are not excluded from advancements in medical science.

Hawaii has an opportunity to lead the nation in addressing the mental health crisis by fostering innovation through SB 1042. This bill aligns with Hawaii's values of compassion and inclusivity by prioritizing research, harm reduction, and equitable access to emerging therapies.

## **Personal Appeal**

I am one of many residents who stand to benefit from this legislation. My lived experience with PTSD has been marked by profound challenges that current treatments have failed to alleviate. Psychedelic-assisted therapy offers hope where none previously existed—a chance not just to manage symptoms but potentially to heal from them. Passing SB 1042 would provide individuals like me with access to scientifically validated treatments that could transform our lives.

## **Call to Action**

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of SB 1042 and allocate necessary funding for its implementation. By doing so, you will not only advance mental health care in Hawaii but also affirm our state's commitment to evidence-based solutions and compassionate governance.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,  
Deborah Umiamaka

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:50:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruta Jordans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha House Committee on Finance. I am writing in strong support for SB1042. It establishes a mental health emerging therapies pilot program to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

My concern is about the inappropriate use of addictive opioids for veterans with PTSD. I have seen veterans fighting to overcome addictions prescribed by the VA who were able to deal with the addiction and PTSD after one controlled session using psychedelics. It is my hope that through research and education our veterans will receive medicines appropriate to their needs. Please support this measure, which provides a legal pathway for therapeutic access for breakthrough therapies to our veterans.

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:25:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TY Cheng	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

## Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,

My name is TY Cheng, President of Aloha Green Apothecary, one of Hawaii's licensed medical cannabis dispensaries. I am writing in strong SUPPORT of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies pilot program to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

As a Schedule 1 substance, cannabis was also labeled as having no medicinal value. The federal government is now on the verge of rescheduling cannabis after new medical research shows what many patients have known all their lives – that cannabis has medicinal value. The same holds true for some psychoactive therapies for mental illness.

I wish to highlight how far we have come in better understanding of natural remedies available to us. Alternative mental therapies with psychoactive substances are no different as new medical research shows a positive impact on patients' lives with little to no risk when administered by a healthcare professional.

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,

TY Cheng



**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:21:39 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Abbas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha, I'm writing in support of this bill. 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. The studies are showing amazing benefits in shorter amounts of time than other therapies. Mahalo for your consideration!**

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 9:13:03 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kate Paine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Save anguish, time and \$\$ by doing the right and ethical thing. Pass SB1042.

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 9:50:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Brinker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support



## **RE: Strong Support for SB1042 HD1 – Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program**

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi & Members of the Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Maui Breakthrough Collaborative and its partners, I am writing to express our strong support for SB1042 HD1, which establishes a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program under the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

This legislation is of deep importance to the people of Maui, particularly in the wake of the devastating 2023 fires. The trauma left in the fires' wake continues to impact families, first responders, kūpuna, and our keiki. Many remain in quiet crisis. Maui's survivors—those who held the line, lost loved ones, and stayed to rebuild—still carry the weight of their experiences. We must not turn away now.

SB1042 offers a path forward by exploring new therapeutic models for trauma and PTSD care—not as a drug policy, but as a wellness innovation policy. This bill is not “pro-drug.” It is pro-research, pro-therapy, and pro-resilience. The treatments referenced in the bill—such as MDMA-assisted therapy—are not standalone pharmaceuticals. They are investigational therapies administered in highly regulated clinical settings under medical and psychotherapeutic supervision. Their success depends entirely on therapeutic context, oversight, and patient-centered care.

Furthermore, SB1042 is structured to reduce financial risk for the State. By requiring matching private sector investment, the bill sets a high bar for participation and ensures that only serious, well-organized research partnerships will activate the public funds. This structure invites innovation while safeguarding taxpayer dollars. It encourages the philanthropic and research community to come forward to meet Hawai'i's mental health challenges with evidence-informed solutions.

This bill also challenges the research community to develop culturally responsive, cost-effective, and scalable models of care that may become essential tools in Hawai'i's mental health infrastructure. The PTSD crisis in Hawai'i—particularly among veterans, fire survivors, and health care workers—is real. This legislation offers a chance to pilot new hope.

We urge the Legislature to support SB1042 HD1 and to give our communities the opportunity to explore safe, science-based therapies for those whom traditional approaches have failed.

Mahalo for your consideration and leadership.

With respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Lorin", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew Lorin

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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 5:49:51 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 6:29:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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 bandaaid 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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 6:52:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN 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 pilot program to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.**

**So glad to see the bill make it this far.**

**I am both a Veteran & commercial boat captain. I've seen way too many colleagues try ( and fail ) to manage mental health issues with booze and Rx.**

**We are way overdue for new tools.**

**Please don't waste this opportunity.**

**Big Thanks from the Big Isle.**

**Sian**



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

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

[Hearing with the House Committee on Finance](#) | Wednesday April 2, 2025 at 3:30pm

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,

My name is Lauren Myers, and I am writing to express my strong support of SB1042, the bill advancing access to psychedelic therapy in Hawai'i. I share this as both a veteran and the spouse of a veteran Navy SEAL who suffered deeply from PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

For years, I watched my husband struggle. He tried everything available to him including treatments through the VA, civilian providers, and a wide range of prescription medications. None of it helped. The medications often made things worse. They dulled his emotions, disrupted his sleep, and left him feeling more hopeless than before.

After nearly five years of searching for relief, someone told him about psychedelic therapy. At that point, we were out of options and willing to try anything. That decision changed everything. It was the first and only treatment that brought him lasting peace and healing.

Watching his transformation gave me the courage to address my own trauma. As a veteran myself, I had been living with PTSD for years. I chose to try psychedelic therapy, and it helped me in ways no other approach ever had. It did not just help us individually. It saved our marriage and brought stability back to our family.

We are not alone in this experience. I personally know many veterans and spouses who have found hope and healing through these treatments when nothing else worked. This is not a last resort. It is a vital path forward that can offer real and lasting change.

Please support this legislation. Veterans, their families, and those living in Hawai'i deserve access to every effective tool for healing. We cannot afford to turn our backs on what is working.

Mahalo,  
Lauren Myers

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:01:41 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

## Comments:

I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies pilot program 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

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:40:09 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

House Committee on Finance | 2025 Legislative Session

Tuesday April 2 | 3:30

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Vanessa Torres, I live in Pahoā, 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 in 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.

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

[Hearing with the House Committee on Finance](#) | Wednesday April 2, 2025 at 3:30pm

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,

My name is Sara Kuuipo Mishina Kunz, I live in Kaimuki, and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies pilot program to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

As someone diagnosed with PTSD, a psychology graduate student, and a practitioner of holistic wellness such as yoga and meditation, I have seen both the data and personal experiences that speak to the efficacy of this modality of healing support. Additionally, in my time living abroad, I have visited countries where more substances were legal, and as a result, seen much healthier populations—when we legalize, we can regulate. Right now, many people experiment with things such as MDMA, Ketamine, and Psilocybin on their own with negative results. By legalizing the therapeutic use of these substances, we can help people heal in ways that are regulated, safe, and support our economy

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,  
Sara KM Kunz



**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 9:26:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)****[Hearing with the House Committee on Finance](#) | Wednesday April 2, 2025 at 3:30pm****Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN 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 PTSD 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**

**Functional Medicine RN & Psychedelic Medicine Specialist**

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 9:35:26 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Vaughan	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 9:49:59 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Fairchild	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I support SB1042 as someone who has lost a loved one to suicide and who has had many friends and family struggle with suicidal thoughts. As a community, we need to reach for all kinds of mental health treatments to address our mental health crisis. Additionally, Hawaii is already considered on some levels as a place of healing, and legalizing cutting-edge mental health treatments would help us build on our economic potential of becoming a center for mental health healing.

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 10:11:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Egbo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of SB1042****Hearing with the House Committee on Finance | Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 3:30 PM**

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,

My name is Christopher Egbo, a resident of Punchbowl, and I stand in strong support of SB1042. This bill's establishment of a mental health emerging therapies pilot program is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the groundbreaking research and clinical application of breakthrough therapies.

My support is rooted in both personal observations and scientific evidence. I've witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of these therapies on military veterans within our community, who have shared stories of profound healing and renewed lives. Colleagues have also attested to the life-altering effects of ketamine treatments in managing their depression. This isn't anecdotal; it's supported by rigorous scientific research.

For two decades, global research institutions have illuminated the therapeutic potential of psilocybin and MDMA. Studies consistently demonstrate psilocybin's efficacy in addressing a spectrum of mental health conditions, including anxiety, addiction, and treatment-resistant depression. Similarly, MDMA has shown remarkable results in treating PTSD. The FDA's designation of these substances as "Breakthrough Therapies" underscores their potential and safety when administered in controlled clinical settings.

Hawai'i has the opportunity to join a growing movement of states recognizing the importance of these therapies. Oregon, Colorado, Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Texas, and Washington have all taken legislative action to support research and access. SB1042 would ensure Hawai'i residents are not left behind in accessing these potentially life-saving treatments.

Mental health challenges affect every corner of our community. We all know someone who could benefit from these innovative therapies. SB1042 provides a responsible and legal framework for therapeutic access in Hawai'i. I urge you to support this bill and prioritize the mental well-being of our citizens.

Mahalo.



**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 10:49:54 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Stone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,

My name is Andrea Stone. I live in Hawai'i County and I am writing in strong support of SB1042, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies pilot program 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,

Andrea Stone



April 1, 2025

Testimony in **Strong Support** of SB1042/(HSCR1312)

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi  
and Members of the Committee on Finance,

Mahalo for prioritizing this important effort to prevent local suicides and honor the service of local veterans.

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>

**More than 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 to this effort if this bill passes and will help raise other non-govt funds.**

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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 11:34:09 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Gonce	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support.

As a combat veteran I wholeheartedly support this bill that creates a pilot project. I believe the pilot project data will show the potential good these types of programs will create for veterans and all demographics who need these services. I hope we give the pilot project the opportunity to show the data and potential. Please pass this measure.

## Breaking the Silence: A Veteran's Journey Through Mental Health, Failed Treatments, and the Hope in Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy

Testimony in Support of SB1042

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Friday March 14 | 9:00 am

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

My name is Joe, I live in California, 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.

By Joe Hudak, MSG(R)  
San Diego, CA, USA

As a local retired service member, I spent over a decade fighting a war that most people don't see—a war within my mind. Returning home from multiple deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, I continued to find myself fighting battles. This inner war was a grueling fight against depression, anxiety, and suicidality. In a culture where masculinity often means suppressing emotions, many of us struggle silently, unable to express our vulnerability. The brotherhood we relied on in combat is replaced by a loneliness that magnifies our inner turmoil.

Once I finally asked for help, I was met with the standard course of treatment. I spent hours in therapy sessions, swallowed countless pills, and cycled through different medications in search of relief. Yet, the crushing weight of PTSD and the hopelessness of suicidal thoughts remained. I became a statistic—one of the myriad veterans struggling with mental health, feeling betrayed by a healthcare system that seemed ill-equipped to understand or help. It was hard to admit that I was suffering—and it was killing me.

Here in San Diego, we're a gigantic military town, and the military and civilian communities know this story all too well. Many of us feel left behind by traditional treatments that often fail to address the complex trauma that comes from military service. The mental health crisis among veterans in our community is not an abstract problem—it's a reality that affects our families, neighbors, and friends. Yet we often battle these demons alone, afraid to appear weak or vulnerable. The waiting lists are long, the therapy options are limited, and many of us turn to substance abuse as a way to cope.

After years of being stuck in ruminations with no forward progress, let alone the goal of happiness, I stumbled upon something that changed my life: psychedelic-assisted therapy. I

know it's controversial, but when traditional treatments failed me, psychedelics like ibogaine or psilocybin offered a new path. Through guided therapy sessions, I confronted the root of my trauma in ways I never could before. I was finally able to be vulnerable in a setting that felt safe, allowing me to embrace parts of myself I had buried for years. For the first time, I felt like I was truly healing—not just masking my symptoms but addressing the core of my pain.

Psychedelic-assisted therapy is not a quick fix, and it's not a cure-all. But for me, it was a breakthrough. With the support of conventional therapists, I was able to reframe my traumatic experiences, finding a sense of peace that had long eluded me. The therapy taught me that vulnerability is strength—a crucial part of healing that allowed me to reconnect with the camaraderie I had missed since leaving the military. This therapy gave me the tools to see my life differently, to embrace the present, and to finally silence the dark thoughts that had plagued me for years.

Our San Diego community—and our country at large—needs to change how we treat our veteran neighbors. The VA and mental health providers must expand access to innovative treatments like psychedelic-assisted therapy, which has shown incredible promise in studies and personal stories alike. It's time to challenge outdated notions of masculinity that prevent many of us from seeking help and embrace treatments that allow us to be vulnerable, open, and honest about our struggles.

To my fellow veterans: you are not alone, and your battle is not in vain. I urge our community, our healthcare providers, and our lawmakers to support research and access to psychedelic-assisted therapies. Let's redefine what it means to be strong—to be a warrior. It's time to break free from the stigma, embrace innovation, and give veterans the tools they need to heal. For many of us, this is not just about treatment. It's about survival.

Having 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. It's time to stop fighting this battle alone and start exploring new paths to healing. The brotherhood we built on the battlefield can continue off it if we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to reach out, and to support one another in our healing journeys. The future of veteran mental health depends on it.

## **Bio:**

Joe Hudak is a retired Army Master Sergeant who served 20 years in the Army Special Forces as a Green Beret. As a resident of San Diego for over 13 years, he is now an advocate and counselor for innovative mental health treatments for veterans, including psychedelic-assisted therapy. He received a Foundational Healing Grant from the non-profit [Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions \(VETS\)](#).

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 12:09:22 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Lillibridge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of [SB1042](#)

[Hearing with the House Committee on Finance](#) | Wednesday April 2, 2025 at 3:30pm

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN 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.

With aloha, Amanda Lillibridge

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 12:37:38 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

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 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 should be studied in how 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,

Dr. Robin Martin

**Testimony in Support of SB 1042 – The Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program**  
**House Committee on Finance**  
**April 3, 2025**

**Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, 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 Hawai‘i and across the nation.

I am the daughter of a U.S. Marine who died by suicide after years of struggling with ineffective treatments. His life—and subsequent death—shaped me personally and professionally. Since the mid-1980s when he passed, we’ve seen important strides in trauma treatment, but available interventions continue to fall short for many. My work as a clinical scientist focuses on rapid-acting, evidence-based treatments for trauma-related disorders including PTSD and suicidality. I specialize in psychoplastogens—such as psilocybin and ibogaine—that rapidly promote neuroplasticity and may offer robust and sustained symptom relief.

I currently lead multiple clinical trials including psilocybin-assisted therapy for Veterans with PTSD and depression. I’ve also published extensively on ibogaine, 5-MeO-DMT, and ketamine therapies, and advise legislative and research efforts in Texas, Connecticut, Illinois, and internationally. My appointments include Baylor College of Medicine, Yale School of Medicine, and the VA Medical Center in Houston. I also serve as Chief Science Officer for Reason for Hope and the Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition.

The need for novel mental health interventions has never been more urgent. Traditional treatments often take too long to work, come with significant side effects, or fail altogether. Psychedelic-assisted therapies—particularly MDMA and psilocybin—have been designated by the FDA as Breakthrough Therapies because of their potential to offer rapid and durable relief for those who have exhausted all other options.

SB 1042, as currently amended, would establish a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program, a timely and appropriate structure that aligns with successful models in other states such as Connecticut. This legislation will:

- **Advance clinical research** through public-private partnerships, enabling Phase III FDA-regulated trials and additional pilot studies that can expedite access and reduce future implementation barriers.
- **Support education and training** for mental health professionals, ensuring Hawaii is proactively building capacity ahead of expected FDA approvals.
- **Launch patient access initiatives**, including compassionate use programs and pilot care delivery models that prioritize Veterans, first responders, and others most in need.
- **Ensure oversight and transparency** through required annual reporting, continuous evaluation, and adaptable implementation based on evidence and community input.



As a researcher in this field, I see firsthand how lives are lost while bureaucratic delays and funding shortfalls stall progress. Many Veterans and first responders are forced to travel out of state—or out of the country—for treatments that should be available in safe, legal, and supportive environments at home. I've heard their stories. I've seen their recoveries. These therapies don't just save lives—they restore lives.

Hawaii now has an opportunity to lead. With SB 1042 in its pilot form, the state can take real action by building a pathway for safe, ethical, and effective implementation of these life-saving interventions. Other states—including Texas, Maryland, Connecticut, and Arizona—have begun to act. Hawaii should be next.

Thank you for your leadership, and for your commitment to mental health innovation. I urge you to support and advance SB 1042 through the Finance Committee and help make these transformative therapies a reality for Hawaii's people.

I am happy to answer any questions or provide additional input. Please note that I submit this testimony on behalf of Reason for Hope, the Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition, and NPSYT, PLLC. While I include my academic affiliations for reference, I am not speaking on behalf of those institutions.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Lynnette A. Averill, Ph.D.**

Chief Science Officer, Reason for Hope

Chief Science Officer, Veterans Mental Health Leadership Coalition

--

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

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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 12:46:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Schafer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I write to you today in strong support of SB1042, which seeks to expand access to plant medicines as an efficacious treatment for our nation's warfighters. I present this testimony not only as the spouse of a Special Operations veteran but also as the Director of Services for a well-established Special Operations nonprofit. In both my personal and professional capacities, I have witnessed firsthand the profound healing effects of plant medicines for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress (PTS), traumatic brain injury (TBI), toxic exposure, and combat-related trauma.

The invisible wounds of war are among the most devastating and least understood consequences of military service. While physical injuries are readily addressed, the psychological and neurological scars often remain untreated or, worse, ineffectively managed through a cycle of prescription medications and short-term interventions. The statistics paint a stark reality: 17 to 22 veterans die by suicide every day, and more than 400,000 service members have been diagnosed with TBI since 2000, although there is evidence that these statistics are grossly underreported. This crisis is not only a burden on the individual veteran, it extends to their families, their communities, and future generations.

For too long, conventional treatments have failed our warfighters. Antidepressants and opioids often mask symptoms rather than address the root cause of trauma, leaving many veterans in a perpetual cycle of despair. However, research and real-world evidence demonstrate that psychedelic-assisted therapies, particularly psilocybin, ibogaine, and ayahuasca, offer a fundamentally different approach. These medicines promote neurogenesis, help rewire neural pathways damaged by trauma, TBI and toxic exposure, and enable deep psychological healing. In clinical studies, for example, ibogaine has demonstrated remarkable potential in repairing damage caused by TBIs.

My husband and I were raised in the era of the D.A.R.E. program, where all substances were broadly categorized as "drugs" to be feared and avoided. Yet, after enduring significant personal trauma—his from childhood, combat, and the loss of his first wife to suicide and mine from an abusive marriage at the hands of an unhealed warfighter-- we both found ourselves searching for real healing and purpose. Through extensive research and careful, intentional experiences with plant medicine, we witnessed firsthand its ability to unlock trauma, restore emotional balance, and rebuild resilience.

In my professional role, I work closely with Special Operators who have spent decades in high-intensity combat environments. Many of them suffer from severe trauma, often compounded by childhood adversity and the relentless pace of their careers. Time and again, I have seen warfighters on a path of self-destruction reclaim their lives after guided plant medicine therapy, combined with intentional integration. These are not isolated cases, they represent a growing body of veterans who have found healing through means that conventional medicine has failed to provide. The proof is in the pudding.

Plant medicines are not a fad. They are not a panacea. They are, however, a powerful and effective tool—one that our veterans deserve access to without stigma or bureaucratic barriers. This is not about politics; this is about saving lives.

Our warriors fought for this nation. It is now our duty to fight for their right to heal. I urge you to support SB1042 and ensure that plant medicine therapy is available to those who need it most.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

**Senate Bill 1042**

Wednesday, April 2, 2025  
3:30 pm  
VIA Video Conference  
Conference Room 308  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 1042**

Good afternoon Chair and Vice Chair,

My name is Kierston Cashman, and I am a senior at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa where I am pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. I am here today to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 1042.

Senate Bill 1042 addresses the urgent need to improve mental health services across Hawai‘i, especially for veterans in Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i is home to a large population of active duty service men and women, as well as a significant population of veterans, according to the Hawai‘i Defense Economy, Hawai‘i is home to more than 250,000 military personnel; Many of them struggling with mental health challenges. These challenges are compounded by limited access to comprehensive care and the stigma that often surrounds seeking help for mental health issues.

Our state’s large veteran population faces critical obstacles, including difficulty transitioning back to civilian life and a heightened risk of conditions such as PTSD or CPTSD, depression, and anxiety. Unfortunately many veterans do not seek the help they need, often because they fear being stigmatized or feel isolated due to a lack of mental health resources that specifically address their experiences.

As a college student, I have witnessed the struggles of my friends who have served in the military. Many of them are using their GI Bill benefits to pursue higher education, but they continue to grapple with the emotional and psychological challenges of transitioning out of the military. The mental health struggles they face before, during, and after their service are all commonly shared amongst service members, and the lack of proper mental health support exacerbates these issues.

SB1042 is a much needed solution. The bill's emphasis on emerging therapies such as MDMA assisted therapy for PTSD and psilocybin therapy for treatment resistant depression offers a promising alternative for veterans who have not responded to conventional treatments. These therapies, recognized by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for their breakthrough potential, have shown remarkable results in clinical trials, particularly among veterans, potentially saving lives.

The emerging mental health therapy pilot program proposed by SB1042 will also enhance research and clinical trials, ensuring that these new treatments are delivered safely and effectively. By providing funding for education and training for mental health professionals, the program will also help create a more informed and capable workforce to support veterans in need. Public education and harm reduction efforts are also vital components of this bill, ensuring that all residents of Hawaii, especially our veterans, have access to the most advanced and effective mental health care.

I urge you to support SB1042 and help ensure that our veterans have access to the mental health care they deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kierston Cashman  
Kcash@hawaii.edu

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

[Hearing with the House Committee on Finance](#) | Wednesday April 2, 2025 at 3:30pm

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,

My name is Elena Theofilatos, I live in Pahoia, on the Big Island of Hawa'i and I am writing **in strong support of SB1042**, which establishes a mental health emerging therapies pilot program to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

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



**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 1:16:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of SB 1042

Submitted by: Kevin Martin

Oahu Resident, U.S. Army Veteran, Purple Heart Recipient

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

My name is Kevin Martin. I am a 33-year-old construction project manager living in Oahu and a U.S. Army veteran. I served as a Cavalry Scout, including 11 months in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where I was wounded in action when my vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED). I thought the most difficult part of war would be combat itself—but I was wrong. The hardest battle I fought was coming home.

For years, I struggled with severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and suicidal ideation. Traditional treatments—prescription medications, talk therapy, and the resources provided to veterans—failed me. Nothing brought relief.

I was raised in a conservative Catholic family that viewed psychedelic substances as dangerous. But in my desperation, I turned to ketamine-assisted psychotherapy under the care of Dr. Cook at Beyond Mental Health. Over the course of 18 treatments in a structured, clinical setting, my life transformed. My nightmares stopped. My impulsivity decreased. My ability to regulate emotions improved. I let go of the past and finally began moving on with my life. Most importantly, I have not felt suicidal in years.

Hawai'i, like the rest of our country, is in the midst of a mental health crisis. We are losing veterans, first responders, and civilians alike to suicide. We cannot afford to let stigma or outdated policies stand in the way of life-saving treatments. Emerging therapies like ketamine and psilocybin offer a real, evidence-based solution.

I urge you to pass SB 1042 to establish a two-year pilot program for mental health emerging therapies in Hawai'i. I am living proof that these treatments work. Had I not undergone ketamine-assisted therapy, I do not believe I would be here today.

Please be bold. Please be compassionate. Please pass this bill and give others the same chance at life that I was given.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin Martin

Purple Heart Recipient

## 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.

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,

Josh Sze

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:05:33 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

## Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN 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 pilot program to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and more to bolster research and education around breakthrough therapies.

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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:07:15 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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 Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN 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

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:10:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN 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, hearing loss, vision damage, exposure to hundreds of 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 safe and 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. Over TWO DECADES. The constant deployments never allowed my body to get out of the sympathetic fight or flight state.

In our search for alternative treatments, we discovered plant medicine and came across VETS Solutions, a nonprofit founded by former Navy SEAL Marcus Capone and his wife, Amber. Their organization has helped an astounding 1,000 veterans, yet due to overwhelming demand, they are forced to turn many away.

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.

This unmet need speaks to a far deeper crisis—one that is costing lives. This is the reality for so many veterans. Ask any veteran, and they will tell you they know someone who has died by suicide. Since 2001, 7000 service members have lost their lives to the Global War on Terror. Those who have lost their lives to suicide: 140,000.

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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:30:17 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the FIN Committee,**

My name is Vicky Farmer, and I live on Hawai‘i Island. I am writing to **strongly urge you to support and PASS SB1042**, which establishes a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Pilot Program—a program designed to support clinical trials, train mental health professionals, and expand research on breakthrough therapies. This bill has evolved into a pilot study under the Office of Wellness and Resilience, prioritizing veterans and, hopefully, other high-risk populations in the future.

This bill has the potential to transform mental health care in Hawai‘i and provide desperately needed solutions.

**A Crisis We Can No Longer Ignore**

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Hawai‘i.

For years, we believed 22 veterans a day died by suicide. A decade later, we learned that number was actually closer to 44. This is a staggering tragedy—a devastating loss for those who signed a blank check in service to this country. Since 2001, **7000** lives lost to combat. **140,000** lives lost to suicide.

And the reality? Many veterans have had to seek lifesaving treatments outside the U.S.—accessing ibogaine, ayahuasca, psilocybin, and more in other countries because they are not legally available here.

This is unacceptable.

### **Why This Matters: A Personal Story**

This is my first legislative session providing written and in-person testimony. I am a military spouse, and I have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of complex PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury).

My husband is a 22-year U.S. Army veteran and Special Forces Green Beret. He completed 10 combat deployments. He survived the war abroad but almost lost the war at home.

He was an engineer, a title that, in the military, often means blowing things up. He was exposed to IEDs, burn pits, heavy weaponry, mass casualties, near misses—he was even shot several times. He lost teammates in combat—and then, to suicide.

At first, he hid it well. His wounds weren't visible—but they were profound. He didn't struggle with alcoholism. Instead, he suffered in silence.

The military trained him for war, but when he came home, there was no training for how to live with what he had seen, done, and survived.

The VA's solution?

Thirteen medications.

Thirteen medications that left him feeling like a zombie—disconnected, numb, and barely present.

We tried everything:

- Music therapy
- Art therapy
- Talk therapy
- Equine therapy
- Neurofeedback
- Transcendental meditation
- Hyperbaric oxygen treatment
- EMDR, prolonged exposure therapy, and more

I say “we” because we are a team. I have always been his fiercest advocate.

But nothing worked. Nothing even scratched the surface.

### **A Desperate Search for Something That Works**

Several years ago, my husband was in crisis. Articles about psychedelic therapies started appearing in my newsfeed.

And you know what my first reaction was?

Absolutely not.

The idea of putting a highly trained, suicidal veteran on something that makes him hallucinate sounded like a terrible idea.

But when nothing else is working, you rethink everything.

I began to dig into the research—NIH studies, clinical trials, documentaries, podcasts, veteran testimonies. That’s when I found VETS Solutions, a nonprofit started by Marcus and Amber Capone to help veterans access psychedelic-assisted therapy outside the U.S..

We applied. We received a grant. We got on a plane.

And for the first time in years, my husband experienced profound relief.

### **A Catalyst for Healing**

This was not a miracle cure. It wasn’t an overnight fix.

But it was a catalyst.

It gave him neuroplasticity—the ability for his brain to heal.

It gave him space to breathe—to step outside his trauma.

It gave him the ability to process what he had survived.

Because here’s the truth:

PTS doesn't just affect the veteran. It affects the entire family.

We, too, carry the weight of war.

But healing?

Healing ripples outward. It spreads through a family like a wave rolling across the ocean.

### **We Call Them Heroes—But Deny Them Treatment**

We hold our veterans in high regard.

We tell them, "Thank you for your service."

But words are not enough.

How can we call them heroes while denying them real, effective treatment—treatment that forces them to leave the country just to heal?

### **This Is a Human Issue—Not a Political One**

This treatment is not for everyone. But it is a proven tool.

We are not asking for blind faith. We are asking for science-backed solutions.

We must remove the stigma surrounding mental health treatment.

### **The Science Speaks for Itself**

For reference, I have included National Institutes of Health (NIH) studies on psilocybin and MDMA-assisted therapy:

NIH Study on Psilocybin and Depression - [NIH Study on Psilocybin and Depression](#)

- Every study in this review found psilocybin significantly reduced depressive symptoms, with minimal side effects—offering clear advantages over traditional SSRIs, which often come with greater risks and adverse effects.

NIH Study on MDMA and PTSD - [NIH Study on MDMA and PTSD](#)

- Research from MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) demonstrated that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy constitutes a substantial improvement over available PTSD treatments in both safety and efficacy.

## **The Time to Act Is Now**

Every member of this committee has the power to move and pass this bill.

You have the ability to make **history in Hawai‘i**.

Veterans deserve healing.

First responders deserve healing.

The people of Hawai‘i deserve healing—NOW.

Please, stand with us. Pass SB1042.

Lives depend on it.

**Mahalo, mahalo, mahalo**

Vicky Farmer

**Big Island Resident | Military Spouse**

Jaye Olson  
Ewa Beach, HI 96706  
01 April 2025

Dear Committee Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Jaye Olson, and I live in Ewa Beach, Hawaii. I am writing to express my support for Bill SB1042, the "Mental Health Emerging Therapies Special Fund," which establishes a special fund to support clinical trials, training of mental health professionals, and other initiatives aimed at bolstering research and education surrounding breakthrough therapies. This bill would help facilitate safe patient access to care through integration before, during, and after psychedelic-assisted therapy.

As a combat veteran with over 21 years of service, I've witnessed firsthand how psychedelics can change someone's life. I suffer from severe anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and insomnia. I've seen and done things in the Army that no human being should ever have to witness or endure. My world was crushed when a close friend took his beautiful, irreplaceable life. He was like a brother to me; he was compassionate and empathetic. He was battling inside, as were several of the leaders I knew, but seeking help for our mental health was frowned upon or viewed as weak. I told my leadership that I just lost a brother, and they said to me with little empathy, "Let's run it off." From that day on, everything spiraled out of control for me. I became numb and lost my motivation. This merely added to my years of nightmares, insomnia, high anxiety with hidden panic attacks, and a lengthy list of health conditions that I hadn't seen a doctor about. I felt helpless and alone, like I couldn't go on, and I attempted suicide twice.

I had a successful military career thus far and decided to seek assistance outside of the service. I paid out of pocket for one session and some medication, which made me feel even more distant from reality and like a zombie. I stopped taking the prescription and pretended everything was fine. My physical and mental health rapidly deteriorated.

One of my sons was diagnosed with severe autism spectrum disorder (level 3). We established ABA services on the island and were receiving excellent care. I came down on orders to PCS, but the ABA therapy there had a year-long waitlist. After over 20 years of service, I decided to go through the Medical Board process to ensure that my son continued to receive therapy; I wasn't ready to retire. I felt like I went from hero to zero in 2.5 seconds, with no actual purpose in life. When I retired, I was on over nine medications, my body felt sluggish, and my mental health wasn't improving. I wasn't adjusting to civilian life as well as I thought. COVID struck, and I enrolled in a 21-day outpatient program that was over the internet. The program was



helpful, but something was still missing. I kept falling into a vicious cycle of weight gain, my mental health continued to deteriorate, and I felt defeated.

It wasn't until a friend of mine, who suffers from similar issues as I do, told me about a life-changing experience he had with a plant medicine called ayahuasca. I could see the change in him, that he was free from the weight of all those boulders that had been on top of him for the past 20 years, and he wasn't as cynical. At this point in my life, I was willing to try anything, even if that meant going against what I believed in.

The first time I tried plant medicine was at a veteran's retreat. My journey with the medicine was the most profound experience I had ever had. At first, I was worried that I would have a bad experience and be taken advantage of, but it was the exact opposite. Through one of my experiences, I intended to understand my neurodivergent son better and improve my health. My journey revealed that the synapses in his brain were not connected and firing correctly. He also has sensory overloads with screaming episodes that can last for hours. These episodes would trigger my anxiety, and I would flip out. In one of my journeys, I was able to experience and feel what my son would go through with his sensory overloads, and now I can sympathize with him and give him the care that he needs, the same care that I received while I was in the medicine. I am currently only on three meds. I still have a long way to go with my mental and physical health, but I'm further along than I was before my journeys. I think if I had a better integration period, I would be further along with my recovery.

I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that funding these emerging therapies will be life-changing and lifesaving for many to come. Funding this project will enable the integration of a process that will support everyone in their recovery. Funding will also help with the homeless population and those who have addiction problems, because I know that plant medicine and other psychedelic medicines can help this population.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support Bill SB1042 because I know firsthand that psychedelic therapy works and is a life-transforming medicine. Still, without the proper integration process, the medicine will not be as effective as it could be. Please keep an open mind when you make your decision. We need your help to make this happen by funding this project. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Jaye Olson

Phone: 254.702.9385

Email: jayeolson34@gmail.com

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:53:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Bray	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha Committee Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Regina Bray, an Army Veteran, as a former Labor and Delivery registered nurse, and now a Family Nurse Practitioner. I live in Ewa Beach, Hawai‘i (Oahu), and I am writing **in strong** support of SB1042, which establishes a special fund for emerging mental health therapies 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 modalities such as psilocybin, MDMA, ketamine, and others.

My story: I am a 46-year-old and 22-year Army Veteran. I have witnessed and experienced very traumatic events over my lifetime. Some of these graphic events were metaphorically bundled, put in a box, and tucked tightly away. During these times, I didn’t realize these events, albeit tucked away, would resurface into bouts of shame, anger, sadness, loneliness, and even perfectionism. It shaped how I viewed myself and how I showed up (poorly) in my relationships. I buried myself in school and work. As time passed, I came to understand that I needed help. I began therapy and was subsequently placed on medication to help with the extreme anxiety and bouts of depression that ensued. These medications left me feeling blah. I wasn’t able to get to the root of the problem. Enjoyment was a difficult emotion to feel. Love and bliss were feelings that I missed. I was no more myself than before I started therapy and medication. I felt worse at times. It took time to realize this. It took consuming psychedelic plant medicine for me to understand, from a perspective of love and compassion, that the “inner little girl” needs to break free from the pain of these experiences. But how?

I traveled across the ocean to be part of a group of veterans who also suffer from deeply rooted trauma. Our first night, we all sat in a circle with the stars peeking through the top of the teepee on sacred land. We took turns discussing our intentions before consuming the plant medicine. With the assistance of a trained shaman-like individual, I ingested a psychedelic medicine. I desperately needed a deep emotional and psychological healing experience. As the medicine took effect, a wave of emotions, ranging from fear and sadness, took over me. I struggled through the process of allowing the medicine to help me see and feel my truth. During my journey, I sat before an ancestor, Tata of the Yawinawa tribe. He chided me for not breaking away from my physical self. My ego. Tata lay there on his deathbed, asking me just to let go. I couldn’t do as he asked. Tata chided me and said we’d find another way. I became hot and felt unwell and desperately wished I could do as he asked. I was scared to let go of my ego. I purged

and purged, willing the medicine to work and rid myself of these feelings. I knew there was more work to be done beyond the teachings of the medicine, something internal that I had to address to defeat the ridiculous chastising in my head that I deserved these heinous experiences. As the visual hallucinations emerged, I reflected on my internal struggles and memories. I re-experienced aspects of my trauma but also gained a newfound perspective that allowed me to confront the pain, shame, and fear head-on. My guides provided gentle guidance, helping me navigate these intense moments until I could release those unwanted feelings toward myself.

While the entire experience is challenging to put into words, I know firsthand that these modalities (psychedelics) are a necessary accompaniment (for some) alongside integration and therapy so that some can begin the healing journey. While I'm not "cured", I can talk about my experience without feeling deep shame. I can tell my story without big emotions.

My psychedelic experience left me with a sense of unity and interconnectedness. I felt supported in an environment that fostered safety and acceptance of healing. It wasn't an easy experience, but it was a necessary one to overcome the negative state I had been in and emerge with a newfound understanding. I very much understood that the shame I carried wasn't mine to carry, so I was able to let go. I found internal peace with the little girl who was so scared and alone. I could reframe the experience in a way that empowered me to find self-compassion and forgiveness.

Not everyone can afford this type of healing journey, including the cost of travel and time away from home, work, and loved ones. I believe we can help our people here at home, in the United States. Beyond these journeys lie necessary integrative therapies to help individuals find meaning. This is a vital component of the psychedelic experience to make meaning of the experience, to process emotions, and change behaviors for continued growth. The integrative process provides support, allowing the person to feel a sense of community and receive validation. Unfortunately, integration is not readily available as a stigma remains with the use of psychedelics. This is why I strongly believe in the use of psychedelics in the United States, alongside psychotherapy, coaching, or other modalities to keep the momentum that has been set.

Mahalo,

Regina Bray

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 4:02:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kari Goodbar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 6:19:17 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Spiro Theofilatos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of SB1042

Aloha Senators and Members of the Committee,

My name is Spiro Angelos Theofilatos, and I write to you today from the sacred slopes of Hawai‘i Island, where I live and serve as the steward of a growing off-grid retreat space dedicated to healing, spiritual renewal, and community resilience. I am writing in strong and enthusiastic support of SB1042, which represents a visionary step forward in Hawai‘i’s approach to mental health and wellness.

As someone deeply immersed in both traditional and emerging healing modalities, I have witnessed firsthand the profound and life-changing effects that psychedelic-assisted therapy can offer. The research is now undeniable: substances such as psilocybin and MDMA, when administered with care, integrity, and professional guidance, have the potential to transform lives suffering under the weight of treatment-resistant depression, PTSD, addiction, and other chronic conditions.

What SB1042 does is historic—it opens the door for Hawai‘i to responsibly explore and implement these therapies within a structured, culturally respectful, and clinically informed pilot program. This is not a reckless leap. It is a careful, compassionate step rooted in science, backed by data, and aligned with the values of aloha: presence, empathy, and deep listening to the needs of our people.

I urge you to pass SB1042 not only for those currently suffering, but for the generations to come. Let Hawai‘i lead with wisdom and courage. Let us be the healing wave that inspires the world.

With deep gratitude and respect,

Spiro Angelos Theofilatos

Ke Kani o ka Lani, Hawai'i Island

Founder, The Order of the New Eleusis

Musician, Retreat Facilitator, Off-grid Homesteader

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 7:09:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edith Garcia	Individual	Support	In Person

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

**SB-1042-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 8:02:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 1:33:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie Onton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB1042

House Committee on Health | 2025 Legislative Session

Thursday April 2 | 6:30pm

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

My name is Julie, I live in California, 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.

My testimony has to do with psychedelic therapy for psychological trauma. I have been witness to the transformative effect that ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT had on my husband who is a Special Forces veteran with 20 years of service. He experienced many traumas in his life and in his service, the culmination of which resulted in a daily mental torture that made him long for death most days. I am a neuroscientist who recognized that his mental anguish was a manifestation of trauma that does not resemble mental processes in non-traumatized individuals. I watched and helped him go through myriad therapies to make the pain stop. None of it provided deep healing. He spent years in talk therapy, which provided crucial coping mechanisms. But coping is not living. It is surviving.

When the option for psychedelic therapy came into our reality, he jumped at the chance to try another way to find peace. What then ensued was nothing short of a miracle and something that a lifetime of therapy would never achieve. After a single dose of ibogaine, the abusive voices in his head stopped. Then, a single dose of 5-MeO-DMT showed him the essence of love and how to embrace it in his daily life. It was only after these therapies that he truly began living, perhaps for the first time in his life. And in that vein, it is important that people going through psychedelic therapy have mental health support before, during and after the therapy to properly integrate their experiences into their daily lives. Prior to that moment, their choices were not truly their own, and so it can be a scary time without proper support.

The bottom line is that these therapies are truly groundbreaking, though they have been used for millennia. That they are banned in any “free” country is a travesty and must be corrected, not

only for our veterans who fought for this freedom, but for all people who have experienced trauma and live in daily anguish as a result. I have reviewed the literature on these substances and find no reason to restrict their access for therapeutic settings and, on the contrary, I find much evidence of deep healing with even single exposures.

States now have an essential role to play in the movement toward safe, legal, therapeutic access to psilocybin, MDMA (to start with) 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, ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT 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, Julie Onton

**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.

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,  
Elizabeth Snider

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