HF978: Regulated Psilocybin Access Would Benefit Veterans' Mental Health

House File 978 Overview

HF978 would create a framework for limited, legal access to therapeutic psilocybin services for approved patients, provided by state-licensed qualified medical providers.

- The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will develop rules, regulations, and licensure requirements for health providers. HHS will establish a licensing board for psilocybin production establishments, with requirements for licensing, operation, and inspections. The board will begin accepting license applications on July 1, 2026.
- Only qualified health professionals, licensed and granted a provider registration card by HHS, may recommend psilocybin services to select patients over 21 years of age. Before being recommended treatment, a patient must be evaluated in person by a registered qualified medical psilocybin provider, who must be a physician, surgeon, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner or advanced practice registered nurse who has undergone training specific to psilocybin therapy. Administration of psilocybin may take place only in an approved qualified therapy provider location; patients may never take psilocybin products home.
- HF978 does not legalize or decriminalize psilocybin and would retain current prohibitions on the possession, manufacturing, and sale of other psychedelic compounds.
- Similar programs have already been established or approved in Colorado, Oregon, New Mexico, and Utah.

Promise of Psilocybin-Assisted Therapy

- Over the past decade, the medical and mental health communities have increasingly recognized the potential of psychedelic therapies for the treatment of intractable mental health conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder and others.
  - Psychedelics are demonstrating the potential to be more effective treatments than conventional psychoactive medications
  - Legal and logistical barriers to innovation persist even as the range of potential uses for psychedelic substances has expanded.
- In 2018 and 2019, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted a "breakthrough therapy" designation to psilocybin-based treatment for major depressive disorder and severe treatment-resistant depression, and 14 active FDA Phase II or Phase III clinical trials are underway today.
  - Psilocybin has low physiological toxicity, low risk of abuse or addiction, safe psychological reactions, and no linked persistent harmful physiological or psychological effects during or after use, according to years of anecdotal data as well as modern scientific investigations.
- A 2024 article in the academic journal *Brain Sciences* reviewed a dozen high-quality studies on the therapeutic effects of psilocybin administration, concluding: "A quantitative analysis of the studies indicates that psilocybin is highly effective in reducing depressive symptoms severity among patients with primary [Major Depressive Disorder] or [Treatment Resistant Depression]. Both single-dose and two-dose psilocybin treatments significantly reduced depressive symptoms severity, with two-dose administration sometimes yielding more pronounced and lasting effects."

Takeaway

HF978 creates a regulated, limited program to access psilocybin, which has shown

tremendous promise in the therapeutic treatment of a range of neurological and mental health conditions, with minimal risk to both public safety and public health.

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