

U.S. House Appropriations Bill Signals Sea Change in Psychedelic, Cannabis Research

Bill directs NIH to undertake and fund research into psychedelic-assisted therapies and potential benefits of cannabis, could accelerate the pace of research

UNITED STATES, July 30, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives



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Ismail Lourido Ali, J.D.

passed a consolidated appropriations package¹ funding the Department of Health and Human Services, among other agencies. The bill will next be sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee and, if passed and enacted, will mark a significant shift in Congressional support for research of psychoactive substances, a primary project of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (<https://maps.org/>) and its wholly-owned subsidiary, MAPS Public Benefit Corporation (<https://mapspublicbenefit.com>).

While the bill text does not expressly mention psychedelic research, the accompanying report² clearly states that Federal agencies should undertake research of psychedelic-assisted therapies, particularly in support of mental health for Veterans:

"Psychedelic Treatments.—Despite the recent Department of Veterans Affairs' 2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report that showed there were no significant increases in the veteran suicide rate from 2017 and 2018, the Committee is concerned that over 17 veterans on average continue to commit suicide each day, which is a number that has remained persistent over the past decade. There have been many recent studies and clinical trials demonstrating the positive impact of alternative therapies, including psychedelics, for treatment resistant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depressive disorder, particularly for veteran participants. In light of growing interest in this area, the Committee encourages NIH and other relevant Federal agencies to undertake, and where appropriate expand, research to evaluate the effectiveness of psychedelic therapies in treating PTSD, major depressive disorder, and other serious mental health conditions."

MAPS recently released the results of a Phase 3 clinical trial³ demonstrating that MDMA-assisted therapy may be a safe and efficacious treatment for PTSD. When considered alongside analyses

that it may also be a highly cost-effective⁴ treatment with long-lasting benefits⁵, the treatment is positioned to quickly become a front-line response if approved.

In the United States, MAPS has sponsored 10 completed FDA-authorized clinical trials⁶ of MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD and other conditions; MAPS PBC is currently administering another seven MAPS-sponsored trials⁷. Since 2013, the NIH has allocated more than \$821 million⁸ to research for PTSD treatments, yet essentially all funding for breakthrough-designated⁹ MDMA studies has been provided by philanthropic donors¹⁰. If passed, H.R. 4502 could provide critical funding to advance research of this treatment and other promising psychedelic-assisted therapies.

Ismail Lourido Ali, J.D., MAPS' Interim Director of Policy & Advocacy for the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), notes, "Though Congress still needs significant education and demystification regarding psychedelics, interest in psychedelic substances as potential treatments for mental health disorders continues to grow alongside the body of evidence supporting their safety and efficacy for challenging mental health conditions. MAPS is encouraged that the issue of psychedelic care continues to cut through partisan lines, and we look forward to continuing to work with and educate Congress about psychedelic research, therapy, and the harms of the War on Drugs."

An amendment to remove barriers to "any activity that promotes the legalization of any drug or other substance in Schedule I" of the Controlled Substances Act received a 60% increased share of support. Though the amendment failed, it gained 50 votes, for a total of 140 yes votes, as compared to a vote on the same amendment taken two years ago.

The bill and report language also contained moves to align Federal policy with state laws legalizing marijuana for medical or social use; increase funding for research into the potential benefits of marijuana, assessing impairment, and the impacts of legalization; and policies to protect cannabis users in matters of housing, employment.

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4502>

² <https://www.congress.gov/117/crpt/hrpt96/CRPT-117hrpt96.pdf>

³ <https://maps.org/news/media/9122-maps-phase-3-trial-of-mdma-assisted-therapy-for-ptsd-achieves-successful-results-for-patients-with-severe-chronic-ptsd>

⁴ <https://maps.org/news/media/8363-press-release-study-mdma-assisted-psychotherapy-will-be-cost-effective-in-the-treatment-of-ptsd>

⁵ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00213-020-05548-2>

⁶ <https://maps.org/research/mdma>

⁷

https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/results?term=mdma+maps&Search=Apply&recrs=b&recrs=a&recrs=f&recrs=d&age_v=&gndr=&type=&rslt=

⁸ <https://report.nih.gov/funding/categorical-spending#/>

⁹ <https://maps.org/news/media/6786-press-release-fda-grants-breakthrough-therapy->

[designation-for-mdma-assisted-psychotherapy-for-ptsd,-agrees-on-special-protocol-assessment-for-phase-3-trials](#)

¹⁰ [https://maps.org/news/media/8276-press-release-psychedelic-research-fundraising-campaign-attracts-\\$30-million-in-donations-in-6-months,-prepares-mdma-assisted-psychotherapy-for-fda-approval](https://maps.org/news/media/8276-press-release-psychedelic-research-fundraising-campaign-attracts-$30-million-in-donations-in-6-months,-prepares-mdma-assisted-psychotherapy-for-fda-approval)

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