

MA Campaign Turns In Signatures for Psychedelics Ballot

Massachusetts Campaign Turns in Final Signatures to Put Psychedelics Legalization Initiative on November Ballot

A Massachusetts campaign has officially turned in a final batch of signatures to put a psychedelics legalization initiative on the state's November ballot after lawmakers declined to enact the reform legislatively. Activists say they're confident they've secured enough petitions to qualify.

Background

After previously turning in an initial round of signatures that forced legislators to consider the reform, and they declined to advance it, the campaign Massachusetts for Mental Health Options (MMHO) has now submitted another 14,000 signatures to secure ballot placement.

Strong Community Support

"The support from Massachusetts residents has been overwhelming, we are thrilled to be on the ballot this year," Emily Oneschuk, a veteran and grassroots outreach director for MMHO, said in a press release on Wednesday. "Massachusetts veterans have been advocating for this type of care for years, it's time to make it accessible and affordable for them and other struggling Massachusetts residents."

Legislative Challenges

This comes about a month after the legislature's Special Joint Committee on Ballot Initiatives issued a majority report that formally recommended against passing the measure as drafted. The panel previously held a hearing to gain expert feedback on the proposal.

The report acknowledged that a growing body of scientific literature shows psychedelics such as psilocybin "may be highly effective in addressing a variety of adverse mental health conditions" when administered in a controlled environment. However, it said these "promising findings, however, have not provided evidence that the widescale recreational legalization of these substances would be beneficial, let alone safe."

The joint committee also expressed concerns that the measure's primary goals of licensing psychedelics service centers while broadly decriminalizing the substances for adults "likely undercut each other by creating two separate systems for the use of psychedelic substances."

Key Details of the Natural Psychedelic Substances Act

- **Legal Possession and Use:** Adults 21 and older could legally possess, grow, and share certain amounts of psychedelics.
- **Covered Psychedelics and Limits:** The covered psychedelics and possession limits are DMT (one gram), non-peyote mescaline (18 grams), ibogaine (30 grams), psilocybin (one gram), and psilocin (one gram).
- **Penalties:** Possession of amounts up to double the limit would incur a \$100 civil fine, with amounts above that remaining criminalized.
- **Regulatory Body:** A Natural Psychedelic Substances Commission would oversee the implementation of the law and licensing of service centers and facilitators.
- **Advisory Board:** A Natural Psychedelic Substances Advisory Board would study and make recommendations on public health, regulations, training for facilitators, and more.
- **Taxation:** Psychedelics purchased at licensed facilities would be subject to a 15% excise tax, with localities having the option of imposing an additional 2% tax.
- **Effective Date:** The law would be effective December 15, 2024, with the commission and advisory board to be created by March 1, 2025.

Local Government Regulations

Local governments could enact regulations on the time, location, and manner of service centers but could not outright ban them from operating in their area. Adults could propagate psychedelics in a maximum 12×12 ft. space. Civil legal protections would be in place for professional licensure, child custody, and public benefits for those participating in legalized psychedelic activities.

Campaign and Legislative Developments

The campaign first filed two different psychedelics reform initiatives in August, and after the state attorney general determined that they both met the constitutional requirement for ballot placement, activists decided to pursue the version that included a home cultivation option.

Eight cities across [Massachusetts](#) have enacted policies to locally deprioritize enforcement of laws against psychedelics, including Salem, Somerville, Cambridge, Easthampton, Northampton, Amherst, Provincetown, and Medford.

Separately, Governor Maura Healy drew attention to a veterans-focused bill that she introduced to create a psychedelics work group to study the therapeutic potential of substances such as psilocybin. The Honoring, Empowering, and Recognizing Our Servicemembers and Veterans (HERO) Act is a wide-ranging proposal focused on veterans that includes psychedelics policy reform provisions.

Other Legislative Actions

Another bill introduced in the legislature would authorize the Department of Public Health to conduct a comprehensive study into the potential therapeutic effects of synthetic psychedelics like MDMA. Additionally, a different Massachusetts legislative committee advanced a bill in February that would legalize psilocybin therapy and set up a framework to license facilitators for medical, therapeutic, and spiritual applications of the drug.

Rep. Mike Connolly also filed a bill that received a Joint Judiciary Committee hearing on studying the implications of legalizing entheogenic substances like psilocybin and ayahuasca.

The MMHO campaign's submission of signatures marks a significant step towards potentially legalizing psychedelics in Massachusetts. Despite legislative hurdles, the strong community support and growing body of scientific research suggest a promising future for psychedelics reform in the state. The upcoming

November ballot will be a crucial moment for advocates and opponents alike.

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