

## **Hawaii Lawmakers Vote To Study Psilocybin, MDMA Access**

### **Hawaii Senate Health Committee Advances Bill To Create Psychedelics Task Force Focused On Psilocybin, MDMA And Other Breakthrough Mental Health Therapies**

Hawaii senators have advanced legislation that would establish a state task force to study and make policy recommendations on providing access to psychedelic-assisted therapies, including psilocybin and MDMA.

Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee voted 5–0 on Wednesday to approve the measure, SB 3199, sponsored by Chris Lee. The bill was adopted with amendments before being referred to another committee for further consideration.

The proposal would create a Mental Health Emerging Therapies Task Force charged with spending two years reviewing scientific literature, supporting additional clinical research and “developing policy recommendations for safe, ethical, and culturally-informed implementation” of a state psychedelics therapy program.

### **Lawmakers Cite Mental Health Crisis, Suicide Rates And FDA Breakthrough Therapy Designations As Reasons For Proactive State Planning**

“The legislature finds that addressing the mental health crisis affecting the residents of the State, particularly among veterans, first responders, and trauma survivors, is urgent,” the bill states. “Suicide continues to be a leading cause of preventable death, and the State must explore all safe and effective treatment options supported by scientific evidence.”

The legislation points to the fact that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has designated both psilocybin and MDMA as “breakthrough therapies” for certain serious mental health conditions. That status is intended to expedite the development and review of promising treatments and could eventually contribute to rescheduling under the federal Controlled Substances Act.

Given that potential shift, lawmakers wrote that Hawaii “must proactively prepare public health, clinical, and research systems for safe and equitable implementation” of psychedelic-assisted therapies if federal approval occurs.

### **Task Force Would Include Health Officials, Attorney General’s Office And University Of Hawaii Medical School Representatives**

Under SB 3199, the task force would include representatives from the state Department of Health, the attorney general’s office, the Office of Wellness and Resilience and the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa John A. Burns School of Medicine, among others.

As originally drafted, the state Department of Health would have overseen the task force. However, lawmakers amended the bill in committee to place the body under “an entity with demonstrated expertise in primary scientific research and pharmaceutical or medical education.”

The revised language clarifies that assigning the task force to such an entity would not alter the regulatory or enforcement authority of existing agencies. “All statutory authority relating to controlled substances, professional licensure, and public health regulation shall remain with the appropriate executive branch agencies as provided by law,” the amended bill states.

The proposal has now been referred to the Senate Ways & Means Committee for further review.

## **Measure Builds On Prior Hawaii Psychedelics Task Force As Broader Cannabis Debates Continue At The Capitol**

The legislation appears to build on work conducted by a separate psychedelics task force that first convened in 2023 to explore therapeutic access pathways for FDA-designated breakthrough substances such as psilocybin.

Meanwhile, Hawaii lawmakers continue to debate broader drug policy reforms.

The Senate recently approved a bill to legalize low-dose and low-potency marijuana, even as House leaders have indicated that full cannabis legalization is unlikely to advance this session. The Health and Human Services Committee also approved separate legislation to allow patients to access medical cannabis immediately after submitting their registration applications, rather than waiting for physical cards to arrive.

Other proposals including a broader marijuana legalization bill and a measure to regulate certain hemp-derived cannabinoid products—have been deferred.

The psychedelics task force bill now faces additional fiscal review, as lawmakers weigh whether and how Hawaii should prepare for the potential arrival of federally approved psychedelic therapies.

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