

Public testimony submission to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means –
Human Services Subcommittee

March 17, 2023

Good morning,

My name is Angela Carter. I have called Oregon home for 22 years. I write to you today on the matter of funding for the Oregon Psilocybin Program. I am a naturopathic physician, midwife and sexual assault examiner by training, serve as a vice-chair of the Oregon Psilocybin Advisory Board, and I am employed by the OHA, however I represent only myself and my own opinions in the contents of this letter.

Facilitated psilocybin services are not simply a lark or a form of entertainment. Psilocybin therapy has clearly demonstrated efficacy to significantly reduce the morbidity of major depression, anxiety, end of life existential fear, and harmful substance use through rigorous research and by way of thousands of years of traditional use in many different cultures. There is also promising upcoming research on psilocybin's use in other areas of healthcare as well. The psilocybin program has great potential to provide synergistic support with other health systems programs to fulfill the goals outlined in our current state health improvement plan. However, with the current funding strategy, equity is hobbled and access is limited. Considering the program's potential for improving mental and behavioral health outcomes and reducing the heavy burden of harmful substance use morbidity in our state, I believe the funding strategy for this program deserves reconsideration.

The Oregon Psilocybin Program was designed to operate based on the fees assessed for licensure. However, because the program funding is restricted to license fees only, these fees must be higher to maintain the program. High license fees mean that people who have lower incomes and/or do not have access to intergenerational wealth are unable to obtain licensure. As we all know, economic disparities tend to follow lines of race, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other aspects of cultural, social and legal marginalization. We are also aware that health disparities follow these lines as well, and that communities marginalized by racial and gender identity, disability, and sexual orientation face more trauma and carry a higher burden of trauma-related mental health concerns. This means that a higher proportion of people who are members of marginalized communities cannot access licensure, and that these communities who bear a higher burden of mental health concerns and trauma will then not have access to culturally and linguistically specific facilitation services that would offer them support in healing.

High licensing fees are also passed down to those accessing services, creating more financial barriers to access. Under the current fee based model, psilocybin services will likely be financially completely out of

reach for the Oregon Medicaid population who carry the burden of the majority of mental health morbidity and mortality and need access to novel and highly effective mental health support services.

In addition, if SB 303, or any other legislature to modify the program moves forward, the program will not be able to accommodate those requests effectively. The addition of data collection requirements or any other program monitoring without additional funding would further drive up costs for those accessing licensure and services, further reducing the equity and accessibility of the program and its services to the general public.

Essentially, without appropriate funding and agency support, those who need this program the most cannot access it. Equity in health and economic access cannot exist in this current fee based model. I ask that you consider shifting the budget to allow use of general funds to support the psilocybin program so that it may become a relevant and effective means of supporting the health of our community. The voters of Oregon have made apparent their desire for this program to exist, to thrive, and to help people heal. Please help us to fulfill their request

I wish you all a productive day, thank you for your service and for considering my testimony.

Happy Spring.

Angela M Carter (they/them)