

Bill Presentation for AB378
Assembly Health and Human Services Committee
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Jon Dalton

Good afternoon, Chair Brown-May, Vice Chair Nguyen, and members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Jon Dalton [J-O-N D-A-L-T-O-N] and I'm grateful for the opportunity to co-present AB378. Thank you, Assemblyman Carter, for your leadership in championing this bill.

I sit before you today as a proud conservative and Nevadan. As a retired SEAL, I had the honor of serving our country for 23 years, with 11 combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Upon my transition to civilian life, I began experiencing significant challenges as a result of 7 traumatic brain injuries, thousands of subconcussive events and PTSD. Conventional psychiatric treatments provided by the VA were ineffective at resolving my severe anxiety and depression. The side effects were awful and the voodoo treatment approach of traditional psychiatry was to continue to adjust my dose up and down then switch medication after medication in a futile attempt to solve my mental health issues.

Another SEAL urged me to consider psychedelic-assisted therapy. Initially, I refused and dismissed this treatment modality as a bunch of hippie veterans doing a bunch of hippie drugs to get high and escape reality. I put psychedelics in the same bucket as heroin, crack, and cannabis. After considerable research, I realized I was wrong.

I also learned that over 1500 SEALS left the country to pursue psychedelic therapy. Ultimately, I left the country to engage legally in this treatment. The results were profound, and they prevented me from becoming one of the 17-44 veterans a day who choose to end their lives by suicide..

No one who serve our country and our communities should have to leave the country to seek this life-saving therapy. we are battling 50 years of false narratives around these compounds and when we consider how to support our veterans, we must consider the science and the data.

I was honored to serve on the Psychedelic Medicines Working Group established by SB242. Some of the Working Group's recommendations are now reflected in the two companion bills you're seeing this session: SJR10 and the bill we are presenting today: AB378.

AB378 is intentionally structured as a limited-scale pilot—not as an open-ended mandate. This bill creates the legal and regulatory scaffolding necessary to allow the state to test, observe, and evaluate the implementation of psychedelic-assisted therapy for the veteran and former first responder populations.

Our goal is to prove the concept: to gather data, assess outcomes, and demonstrate that this can be done effectively, safely, and responsibly in Nevada. In doing so, we hope to lay the groundwork for a future, fully regulated and expanded statewide access program—built not on theory or advocacy alone, but on real-world results.

I know many legislators support this bill and that it is bipartisan. I also recognize there are some who have legitimate concerns that are less focused on what this bill does but what are the downstream effects. I'd like to address one of those concerns.

If your instinct is to say no to this bill because you believe it is a slippery slope, because you've seen cannabis, go from medical to recreational and you're afraid the same thing will happen if you vote yes for this bill, I am asking you to do what I did and truly study this. If you claim to advocate for veterans, please take some time to get smart on this because the life saving impact these medicines will have on our veterans is greater than anything discovered in the last 50 years. Read the Executive Summary and Summary of key Findings in the Working Group Report, or reach out and ask me questions. When you read it, take notice of two specific things.

- The first is that psychedelic assisted therapy is proven to be a safe, durable, and efficacious game changer that can do what traditional prescription drugs are failing to do.
- The second thing you will see is that Nevada has a genuine crisis with veteran and first responder mental health. You will see that our state's veteran suicide rate is 50 per one hundred thousand which significantly exceeds the national veteran rate of 33 per one hundred thousand and the general population rate of 18 per one hundred thousand. You will see in 2021, suicide was the 13th-leading cause of death for veterans overall and the second-leading cause of death among veterans under 45. Those aren't just numbers. Those are our people. The traditional psychiatric system and the VA are failing them and psychedelic therapy is saving the few of us who leave the very country we served to get help.

If you want to advocate for veterans, then supporting this bill means you are putting your money where your mouth is and truly advocating in the most meaningful way possible..

At this point, we have a moral imperative to make these treatments available. This is our opportunity to establish Nevada as a national leader in how to effectively, and responsibly approach alternative mental health therapies.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.