

2/20/2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division: Oregon Psilocybin Services Budget

Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share information on the Oregon Psilocybin Services budget, within the Public Health Division at the Oregon Health Authority.

My name is Melanie Velez DNP, PMHNP, RN and I psilocybin facilitator at Mandala Journey Work, located in Eugene, Oregon. Passed in 2020 by the voters, Measure 109 was designed to create a state licensed and regulated psilocybin therapy program, allowing access for individuals with mental health needs, and strong safeguards for clients, workers, and the community. Since May of 2023 when the first services were delivered, estimates show that approximately 9,000 people have now been served by the program.

Anecdotally, many individuals seek out psilocybin therapy for unresolved mental health challenges, including PTSD, depression, anxiety, and addiction. Many of the clients the program serves are new to psilocybin, and are specifically looking for a safe, supportive, and comfortable environment to experience psilocybin. As a psilocybin facilitator and psychiatric nurse practitioner, I've seen countless individuals find renewed hope from their psilocybin experience, with effects lasting up to a year with just one session.

One woman reports she was able to overcome crippling sexual trauma and is pleased to report she was able to successfully conceive a child with her husband. Another client called me for an annual repeat journey and said his addiction to pornography has greatly reduced and reported " my therapist graduated me from therapy."

The Oregon Psilocybin Services program has a number of rules in place to ensure safety, including:

- Clients over the age of 21 are only allowed access to consume psilocybin in a state licensed service center, under the supervision of a trained and licensed facilitator.

- All clients must first be screened by service centers to ensure services are a good fit for their health background.
- Service centers cannot be located within 1,000 feet of a school.
- Adverse events must be reported to the state when emergency services need to be called – of all the clients served, less than .12% have had emergency services.

However, less than two years in, the Oregon Psilocybin Services program is still in its infancy. As the first-of-its-kind, programs like this need time and support to reach their full potential. Importantly, 2025 will be the first year there will be access to comprehensive data on the program thanks to Senate Bill 303, passed in 2023. Major research initiatives studying the impacts and outcomes of psilocybin services are also underway; this information will provide invaluable insights into how psilocybin services can be optimized to address Oregon's mental health crisis.

This year, the Oregon Psilocybin Services (OPS) program is at a pivotal moment. A \$3.5 million shortfall within the OPS budget threatens to undermine its ability to provide equitable access to care, which would double licensing fees. For service centers with \$10,000 licensing fees, this is not a change that could be easily absorbed. **This shortfall threatens to undermine Measure 109's core promise to deliver state-regulated psilocybin therapy, and the state's leadership in mental health innovation.** At the same time, House Bill 2387, the Psilocybin Services Program Improvement Bill, offers a path forward to strengthen the program's foundation, improve client safety, and better integrate psilocybin services into Oregon's healthcare and behavioral health systems.

In the coming year, psilocybin therapy is likely to play a stronger role in supporting Oregon's goal to decrease mental health and substance use disorders, but without your support, this innovative mental health initiative could falter before it has the chance to fully demonstrate its impact. **I urge you to champion funding for Oregon Psilocybin Services for the program at this important juncture in the program's development.**

Oregon has the opportunity to lead the nation in addressing mental health challenges with compassion and innovation. Let's give this program the time and resources it needs to establish itself as a model for others to follow, and honor the will of the voters to make this program a success.

Sincerely,

Melanie Velez DNP, PMHNP, BSN, RN

2178 Kimberly Circle

Eugene, OR 97405

541-954-9782