

Ballot Question 4: Legalizing Psychedelic Drugs

On November 5, Massachusetts voters will decide on Question 4: *Legalization & Regulation of Certain Natural Psychedelic Substances* [1] This information is being shared with you because of serious concerns brought about by this proposed ballot question.

According to the Massachusetts *Information for Voters* booklet on 2024 ballot questions published by the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, if Question 4 passes, it will legalize the use of 5 psychedelic drugs (psilocybin, psilocyn, dimethyltryptamine, mescaline, and ibogaine) along with for-profit psychedelic facilities with no ability for towns to ban these facilities. [1] It will also allow psychedelics to be grown at home and given away to others (effectively creating a black market). [1]

Voters are urged to reflect on the opinions and perspectives of relevant experts in this area, including the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society and the Massachusetts Medical Society, as they consider this ballot question:

- ❖ **Massachusetts Psychiatric Society** President and President-Elect testified before the Special Joint Committee (MA Legislature) that this psychedelic initiative petition "...is reckless, irresponsible, and dangerous to the public." [4]
- ❖ **Massachusetts Medical Society** "[These drugs] have been documented to cause psychosis (both new-onset psychosis and exacerbation of psychotic symptoms), mania, and new-onset mania in persons with no previous history of bipolar disorder, and mental health symptoms that may be long-lasting after ingestion." [3]
- ❖ **Majority Report of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (MA Legislature)** concluded, "These promising findings, however, have not provided evidence that the wide scale recreational legalization of these substances would be beneficial, let alone safe." They do not support this initiative petition at this time. [4]
- ❖ **Journal of Psychopharmacology** article notes psychedelic studies "are limited by biases & small sample sizes." [6]
- ❖ **American Psychiatric Association** stresses "There is currently inadequate scientific evidence for endorsing the use of psychedelics to treat any psychiatric disorder except within the context of approved investigational studies." [2]

Passage of Ballot Question 4 would also raise a number of mental health and public safety risks:

- ❖ Legalization reduces perception of harm and increases youth drug use. [12]
- ❖ Psychedelics can alter perception of reality and can cause extreme feelings of euphoria or despair. [5], [13], [14]
- ❖ Psychedelics can worsen or intensify mental health issues, particularly for people with certain pre-existing mental health conditions, including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. [3]
- ❖ Legalization creates new public safety concerns around impairment while driving or operating heavy machinery. [5]

Finally, Ballot Question 4 includes no requirement for licensed facilitators to be mental health professionals or for licensed facilities to be medical clinics [1], [3]; no requirement for a mental health professional to provide patient counseling, support, or accompaniment during attempts to therapeutically employ psychedelics for psychiatric conditions, something that preliminary studies have indicated may be critical if such medical use is ever to be helpful [1], [3]; and no requirement for medical screening or supervised use for home-grown users. [1]

We all want what is best for Massachusetts and the residents of our Commonwealth. Only professionally licensed medical or mental health facilities, under the strict supervision of a physician, should be able to engage in medical or experimental use of psychedelics.



References

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