STATEMENT OF
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VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPIES FOR VETERANS: THE PATH FORWARD
NOVEMBER 18, 2026

Chair Miller-Meeks, Ranking Member Brownley, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ongoing work evaluating psychedelic drugs and psychedelic-assisted therapies for Veterans living with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder, substance use disorders, and other serious mental health conditions. Dr. Ilse Wiechers, Acting Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services, joins me today.

In my testimony, I will highlight key milestones in the advancement of psychedelic research since the start of the second Donald J. Trump Administration, outline VA's current research, detail our interagency collaboration, and address the safeguards VA plans to establish to responsibly furnish these drugs, upon regulatory approval, across our national health care system. VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the United States, providing comprehensive services to over nine million enrolled Veterans annually. Mental health care forms a core pillar of our services, and we continuously integrate cutting-edge, evidence-based treatments to address PTSD, depression, and anxiety, among other mental health conditions.

Since 2025, the Trump Administration has taken decisive action to accelerate psychedelic research and eliminate regulatory obstacles that have historically slowed progress. VA's psychedelics research portfolio has grown substantially in response, and our interagency partnerships are driving rapid and safe scientific advancement.

VA strives to lead the Nation in exploring the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs. We recognize that compounds such as 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), psilocybin, and ibogaine, among others, offer promising potential for the complex mental health conditions affecting many of the Veterans we treat. On August 5, 2026, VA launched an important clinical trial to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of psilocybin for treating major depressive disorder in Veterans, including those with concurrent PTSD. As of September 2026, VA is conducting 21 active clinical research studies investigating psychedelic treatments for mental health conditions, including MDMA, psilocybin, N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD).

As with all VA research, VA conducts study activities in settings with rigorous safety protocols and in compliance with Federal guidelines. VA gathers robust scientific evidence regarding the efficacy and safety of psychedelic compounds paired with psychotherapy. While we prepare for clinical use of these compounds outside of research, VA will only proceed with clinical implementation after completion of all regulatory approvals.

In April 2026, President Trump issued Executive Order (EO) 14401, Accelerating Medical Treatments for Serious Mental Illness, establishing a clear Federal mandate to:

- Prioritize psychedelic drugs with Breakthrough Therapy designation for regulatory review;
- Encourage safe, lawful pathways for eligible patients to access psychedelics under the Trickett Wendler, Frank Mongiello, Jordan McLinn, and Matthew Bellins Right to Try Act (Public Law 115-176; 21 U.S.C. § 360bbb-0a);

- Require the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and VA to increase clinical trial participation and exchange data as appropriate and consistent with applicable law; and
- Accelerate evaluation and potential rescheduling of psychedelic products following successful completion of Phase 3 trials, if appropriate under 21 U.S.C. § 811.

EO 14401 marks the first EO in American history dedicated specifically to accelerating clinical research and regulatory review of psychedelics, underscoring the President's firm commitment to advancing emerging treatments for serious mental illnesses. To execute this directive efficiently and to cut red tape, VA and HHS signed a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on July 13, 2026.

This MOU lays the groundwork for unprecedented VA-HHS operational cooperation on psychedelic trials to:

- Increase clinical trial participation;
- Train researchers leading these trials;
- Collect and share critical data, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law regarding treatment effectiveness, safety, and operational costs;
- Assist in the review of medical treatments for substance use disorder and mental health conditions, including potential treatments, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law; and
- Produce comprehensive patient education materials so Veterans know what to expect if trials yield new, approved treatments.

Additionally, FDA and VA executed a complementary MOU to expand information-sharing and scientific collaboration, directly expediting the evaluation of innovative therapies for serious mental illnesses.

As we prepare for potential clinical implementation, VA remains anchored in three core priorities: first, ensuring Veteran safety above all else; second, building a

rigorous body of evidence to determine which treatments work for which Veterans; and third, laying the foundation so that, pending all regulatory approvals, VA is positioned to be the first health care system in the Nation to deliver these treatments to Veterans. These priorities shape every research, clinical, and policy decision we make in this space.

Building that foundation is already underway. Our efforts include establishing specialized clinician training pathways for psychedelic treatments, designing efficient care delivery models, and finalizing facility and patient safety standards. VA has identified 10 facilities with the expertise, physical space, and operational capacity needed to serve as early implementers, educators, or sites-in-training. VA selected these sites after quantitative and qualitative analyses identified them as best prepared to deliver and scale psychedelic treatments. Teams at these locations are experienced in psychedelic research protocols and are preparing to translate that experience into clinical care that maximizes Veterans' safety if treatments are approved. Lessons learned from these initial sites will guide phased expansion to additional VA facilities across the country.

While our research advances, eligible Veterans continue to receive mental health care and support from VA. VA strongly discourages self-medicating or attempting to replace mental health treatment options with psychedelics or any other unprescribed substances. Our proven, evidence-based care options for eligible Veterans experiencing PTSD or depression include mental health care at VA facilities, assistance with reintegration into their communities, counseling at Vet Centers across America, 24/7 access to qualified crisis responders at the Veterans Crisis Line, and immediate emergency suicide care at both VA and community facilities, at VA expense.

VA remains fully committed to driving scientific discovery and rapidly integrating safe, effective treatments into the care Veterans receive every day. We achieve this through rigorous scientific evaluation and by ensuring all new treatments undergo thorough testing and peer-reviewed research to validate their safety profiles before they

are adopted by VA. This disciplined approach ensures we tailor treatments specifically to the unique needs of Veterans and integrate them directly into our health care system. By pioneering and delivering innovative, evidence-based therapies, we advance our objective of ensuring that no Veteran is left behind. We appreciate the Committee's continued efforts to fulfill our shared mission.