STATEMENT OF

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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

FOR THE RECORD

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

WITH RESPECT TO

"Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies for Veterans: The Path Forward"

Washington, D.C. November 18, 2026

Chairwoman Miller-Meeks, Ranking Member Brownley, and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and its Auxiliary, thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments on this important topic.

Veterans continue to face significant challenges from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, substance use disorders, and other serious mental health conditions. While many benefit from evidence-based treatments such as psychotherapy and medication, some do not experience sufficient relief. The VFW supports ongoing research on innovative therapies that may improve veterans' health and quality of life. Veterans who do not respond to current treatments should have opportunities to participate in rigorous clinical research and, once new therapies are proven safe, effective, and receive regulatory approval, access additional evidence-based options.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding research into psychedelic-assisted therapies to better understand their potential benefits and risks for veterans. Currently, VA is involved in 20 active clinical trials on psychedelic therapies for mental health conditions, supported by the Office of Research and Development and over $23 million in external funding. VA has stated that clinical use outside research will be considered only after approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The VFW considers this research an important step toward identifying new treatment options. Veterans should have opportunities to participate in well-designed clinical trials, and VA should proceed based on evidence. Decisions about broader implementation must be grounded in demonstrated safety, effectiveness, durability of treatment effects, appropriate FDA review, and research that represents the veteran population.

Veteran Safety and Informed Consent

Veteran safety must remain the top priority. Psychedelic-assisted therapy involves more than administering medication. These treatments may require careful patient selection, pre-treatment preparation, extended monitored sessions, qualified clinicians, and post-treatment follow-up or integration. Before these therapies move beyond research settings, VA must establish standardized safeguards for patient eligibility, contraindications, medication interactions, adverse-event monitoring and reporting, emergency procedures, provider qualifications, informed consent, and long-term follow-up. Veterans must clearly understand the potential benefits, risks, evidence limitations, alternative treatments, and their right to discontinue participation.

The VFW has consistently advocated for greater transparency and stronger informed consent when veterans make decisions involving treatments with significant risks. This principle is reflected in our support for H.R.4837 / S.3314, *Written Informed Consent Act*. This legislation would expand VA informed consent requirements for certain classes of medications. While these bills do not specifically establish requirements for psychedelic-assisted therapies, the underlying principle is equally relevant: veterans must be fully informed participants in decisions about their health care.

VA must be transparent about findings from psychedelic therapy research, including potential benefits, risks, adverse events, and limitations. Transparency is essential to maintaining veteran confidence, supporting informed decisions, and helping Congress determine if additional safeguards or resources are needed.

Federal Coordination and Remaining Barriers

The VFW supports coordination between VA, FDA, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and other federal partners to advance research, reduce unnecessary barriers, and uphold strong scientific and regulatory standards. Executive Order 14401, Accelerating Medical Treatments for Serious Mental Illness, directs HHS and FDA to collaborate with VA to increase psychedelic clinical trial participation, improve data sharing, and generate real-world evidence. The order also directs HHS, through the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, to allocate at least $50 million from existing funds to support partnerships with states advancing psychedelic drugs for serious mental illnesses. In July 2026, VA and HHS signed a memorandum of understanding that likewise addresses increased clinical trial participation, data sharing, and real-world evidence, in addition to workforce training, clinical guidance, and preparation for potential future FDA-approved treatments.

These actions represent progress, but accelerating research does not remove practical barriers to implementation. Regulatory requirements, long-term funding, workforce capacity, facilities management, coverage and payment policies, and delivery costs could all affect how quickly approved therapies become available to veterans. VA should identify these barriers now rather than wait for treatment approval. Research and operational planning should proceed together to prevent regulatory, staffing, facility, and resource challenges from causing unnecessary delays.

However, efforts to accelerate access must not compromise scientific standards or essential safeguards for veterans.

Implementation and Workforce Readiness

The VFW supports ensuring that psychedelic-assisted therapies demonstrating safety and effectiveness through successful clinical trials can move efficiently toward clinical implementation following appropriate regulatory approval. Patient safety must remain paramount, in addition to comprehensive workforce training.

The VFW believes workforce readiness is a critical issue VA must address before integrating psychedelic-assisted therapies into veteran care. The VA-HHS agreement addresses this challenge by focusing on training for therapists, nurses, physicians, and other clinicians involved in psychedelic research. Preparing VA clinicians and support staff to deliver complex treatments would be a significant undertaking. These therapies may require specialized clinical expertise, extended monitoring, multidisciplinary care, and the ability to respond to adverse reactions or behavioral health emergencies. All care team members must receive comprehensive initial training and ongoing education as evidence and protocols evolve.

VA must ensure its facilities and clinical teams are prepared before treatments become available. This includes appropriate treatment environments, adequate staffing, detailed clinical protocols, pharmacy and controlled-substance infrastructure, emergency response capabilities, patient safety measures, and systems for necessary preparation and follow-up care. Regulatory approval alone does not mean a health care system is prepared to deliver a medication safely. Successful implementation requires a properly trained workforce and a system equipped to provide treatment safely and respond to complications.

Preparing VA for Future Access

VA should begin preparing for the possibility that psychedelic-assisted therapies receive FDA approval. Planning should include assessing workforce needs, provider training, facilities management, treatment capacity, geographic access, staffing levels, payment policy, and resources needed to sustain these treatments. The planning process should also include considering access for rural and underserved veterans. Treatments requiring prolonged supervised sessions and multiple appointments may create significant geographic and logistical barriers. Community care may be needed when VA cannot provide timely, appropriate treatment. The VFW believes community care should supplement, not replace, VA's capacity to provide specialized mental health care. VA must maintain the expertise, workforce, and infrastructure to deliver emerging therapies within its integrated system.

VA and Congress must determine whether these treatments improve veterans' lives over time. Clinical success should not be measured only by symptom reduction. VA should evaluate functional recovery, quality of life, treatment retention, adverse events, hospitalizations, medication burden, substance use outcomes, and durability of treatment effects. Long-term follow-up is necessary to assess whether benefits persist.

If these therapies move into clinical practice, VA should consistently collect and transparently report data on safety, effectiveness, veteran experiences, access disparities, workforce capacity, costs, and long-term outcomes. These data should guide expansion decisions and identify where additional safeguards or resources are needed.

Veterans Are Asking for Safe Alternatives

Veterans with PTSD, depression, substance use disorders, and other serious mental health conditions need additional safe and effective treatment options. Just as importantly, our members are asking for them. The VFW regularly hears from veterans who want access to safe alternative treatments, particularly when existing treatments have not provided the relief they need. Their experiences reinforce the importance of continuing to explore new approaches that could improve veterans' health and quality of life.

The VFW supports rigorous research into psychedelic-assisted therapies and removing unnecessary barriers that could prevent veterans from accessing treatments ultimately proven safe and effective. Veterans should have opportunities to participate in well-designed clinical trials, and VA should continue working to ensure that successful treatments are not unnecessarily delayed in reaching veterans. However, speed must not come at the expense of safety. Veterans should have opportunities to participate in well-designed clinical trials, but VA should proceed based on evidence. VA must identify regulatory and operational barriers early, remain transparent about research findings, establish meaningful informed consent and patient safety safeguards, and ensure facilities and clinical teams are prepared before broader implementation.

The VFW supports efforts to accelerate the research, approval, and implementation of promising psychedelic-assisted therapies while maintaining strong standards for patient safety. VA must ensure that professionals providing these treatments receive comprehensive initial and ongoing training without creating unnecessary delays in access. Workforce preparation, clinical protocols, and facility readiness should advance alongside research and regulatory review to support timely implementation.

If psychedelic-assisted therapies are proven safe and effective and receive FDA approval, veterans should not face unnecessary delays in accessing these treatments. The goal should be to accelerate access while ensuring patient safety. VA must be prepared to deliver these therapies safely and effectively with meaningfully informed consent, appropriate infrastructure, and a properly trained workforce equipped to provide high-quality care.

The VFW thanks this subcommittee for its continued oversight of veterans' mental health care and for the opportunity to provide our views on this important issue.

Information Required by Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives

Pursuant to Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives, the VFW has not received any federal grants in Fiscal Year 2026, nor has it received any federal grants in the two previous Fiscal Years.

The VFW has not received payments or contracts from any foreign governments in the current year or preceding two calendar years.