

# Proposition 122: Access to Natural Psychedelic Substances

*Placed on the ballot by citizen initiative • Passes with a majority vote*

## 1 **Proposition 122 proposes amending Colorado statutes to:**

- 2 • by late 2024, allow the supervised use of psychedelic mushrooms by  
3 individuals aged 21 and over at licensed facilities and require the state to  
4 create a regulatory structure for the operation of these licensed facilities;
- 5 • allow the state to expand the types of substances that may be used in  
6 licensed facilities to include the use of additional plant-based psychedelic  
7 substances — dimethyltryptamine (DMT), ibogaine, or mescaline — starting  
8 in 2026;
- 9 • decriminalize the personal possession, growing, sharing, and use, but not the  
10 sale, of five natural psychedelic substances by individuals aged 21 and over,  
11 including two substances found in psychedelic mushrooms — psilocybin and  
12 psilocin — and three plant-based psychedelic substances —  
13 dimethyltryptamine, ibogaine, and mescaline;
- 14 • allow local governments to regulate the time, place, and manner of operation  
15 of licensed facilities, while prohibiting local governments from banning  
16 licensed facilities, services, and use of natural psychedelic substances; and
- 17 • establish penalties for individuals under the age of 21 for possessing, using,  
18 or transporting natural psychedelic substances and for individuals aged 21  
19 and over who allow underage access to these substances.

## 20 **What Your Vote Means**

### **YES**

21 A “yes” vote on  
22 Proposition 122 requires  
23 the state to establish a regulated system  
24 for accessing psychedelic mushrooms and,  
25 if approved by the regulating state agency,  
26 additional plant-based psychedelic  
27 substances and decriminalizes the  
28 possession and use of psychedelic  
29 mushrooms and certain plant-based  
30 psychedelic substances in Colorado law  
31 for individuals aged 21 and over.

### **NO**

A “no” vote on Proposition 122  
means that the possession and  
use of psychedelic mushrooms and other  
plant-based psychedelic substances will  
remain illegal under state law.

## 1 **Summary and Analysis for Proposition 122**

### 2 **What does the measure do?**

3 This measure allows individuals aged 21 and older to use five specific types of  
4 natural psychedelic substances. Specifically, the measure covers two chemicals  
5 found in psychedelic mushrooms — psilocybin and psilocin — and three other  
6 plant-based psychedelic substances — ibogaine, mescaline, and  
7 dimethyltryptamine, also known as DMT. Psychedelic substances can alter a  
8 person’s consciousness, mood, and awareness of their surroundings.

9 **Personal use.** Upon passage of the measure, psychedelic mushrooms and the  
10 other plant-based psychedelic substances will be decriminalized in state law, and  
11 individuals aged 21 and older will be able to grow, possess, share, and use them.  
12 Personal use does not allow for the sale of psychedelic mushrooms and other  
13 plant-based psychedelic substances.

14 **Licensed facilities.** The measure also requires the state to establish a  
15 regulated system for licensed facilities to offer supervised use of psychedelic  
16 mushrooms for individuals aged 21 and older, starting in 2024. Starting in 2026,  
17 the state may choose to expand the type of substances that may be used at  
18 these facilities to include additional plant-based psychedelic substances.

### 19 **How are these substances currently treated under state and federal law?**

20 All the substances listed in the measure are Schedule I controlled substances  
21 under federal and state law. Schedule I controlled substances are defined as  
22 drugs with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse. If  
23 the measure is approved, the state will no longer treat these substances as  
24 illegal drugs for the purposes of state criminal law. However, they will remain  
25 illegal under federal law.

26 The measure does not decriminalize the possession or use of peyote, a type of  
27 mescaline. Federal law already permits the use of peyote by certain Native  
28 American tribes for ceremonial purposes.

### 29 **Do these substances have medical uses?**

30 Currently, research is being done on the potential medical uses of psychedelic  
31 mushrooms and other plant-based psychedelic substances for treating  
32 depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders, and other  
33 mental health disorders. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has  
34 designated psychedelic mushrooms as a Breakthrough Therapy for treating  
35 depression. Breakthrough Therapy designation is used to speed up the  
36 research, development, and review of a drug when it may offer substantial  
37 improvements over existing treatments. The other plant-based psychedelic  
38 substances permitted for personal use under the measure have been the subject  
39 of research on their potential benefits; however, the FDA has not approved them  
40 for any specific medical use.

## 1 **How will these substances be regulated?**

2 The Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) is the state agency charged  
3 with regulating activities involving psychedelic mushrooms and other plant-based  
4 psychedelic substances for individuals aged 21 and older. Specifically, it will  
5 manage the licensing and registration for facilities where supervised use will  
6 occur, as well as people who are licensed to facilitate the use of them at licensed  
7 facilities. DORA will also regulate related businesses, such as cultivators and  
8 product manufacturers. Additionally, DORA is tasked with protecting consumers,  
9 developing public education campaigns, making recommendations to the state  
10 legislature regarding the potential for off-site use of natural psychedelic  
11 substances received at regulated facilities, and providing data on the  
12 implementation and outcomes of the program. Licensed facilities and related  
13 businesses will be required to pay a licensing fee to cover the cost of regulating  
14 these businesses.

15 Under the measure, local governments can regulate the time, place, and manner  
16 of operation of licensed facilities. Local governments cannot ban or prohibit  
17 licensed facilities, or ban or prohibit the personal use of psychedelic mushrooms  
18 or other plant-based psychedelic substances in their communities.

19 The measure also establishes a 15-member advisory board appointed by the  
20 Governor. The board is charged with making regulatory and policy  
21 recommendations to DORA, other affected state agencies, and the state  
22 legislature.

## 23 **What restrictions does the measure place on the use of substances?**

24 The measure states that it is not intended to:

- 25 • allow the sale of psychedelic mushrooms or other plant-based  
26 psychedelic substances for personal use;
- 27 • allow driving under the influence of these substances;
- 28 • permit use in a school, public building, or public place;
- 29 • permit underage access; or
- 30 • require an employer to permit the use of these substances in the  
31 workplace.

## 32 **What are the criminal penalties and legal protections under the measure?**

33 The measure impacts criminal penalties in several ways. First, it establishes  
34 specific penalties for individuals under the age of 21 who possess or use natural  
35 psychedelic substances, as well as penalties for people who allow underage  
36 access when cultivating these substances. Penalties range from requiring drug  
37 counseling to a \$250 fine. In addition, the measure states that the removal and  
38 reduction of criminal penalties apply retroactively to someone who has already  
39 been convicted of an offense that would be decriminalized under the measure.  
40 Individuals who have completed their sentence may file a petition to the courts to  
41 have their criminal record sealed at no cost. Selling natural psychedelic  
42 substances outside of the licensed supervised use facilities will remain illegal.

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1 The measure also offers protections for people who use psychedelic mushrooms  
2 and other plant-based psychedelic substances, including, but not limited to,  
3 protections from professional discipline, loss of a professional license, or denial  
4 of eligibility for public benefits unless required by federal law.

*For information on those issue committees that support or oppose the measures on the ballot at the November 8, 2022, election, go to the Colorado Secretary of State's elections center web site hyperlink for ballot and initiative information:*

<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Initiatives/InitiativesHome.html>

## 5 **Arguments For Proposition 122**

- 6 1) The measure provides a potentially valuable tool for meeting the mental  
7 health needs of Coloradans. Studies have shown that psychedelic  
8 mushrooms and other plant-based psychedelic substances, combined with  
9 counseling, may provide effective treatment for severe depression, anxiety,  
10 and post-traumatic stress disorder. The FDA has specifically found  
11 psychedelic mushrooms may offer substantial improvement in treating  
12 depression more successfully than existing therapies. Increasing access to  
13 psychedelic mushrooms and other plant-based psychedelic substances may  
14 help people who are struggling to find effective mental health treatment.
- 15 2) Putting people in the criminal justice system for using naturally occurring  
16 substances that have potential mental health benefits does not benefit society  
17 and costs taxpayers money. Possession and use of these substances are  
18 nonviolent offenses that do not pose a public safety risk. Studies have shown  
19 that psychedelic mushrooms are not addictive and that long-term adverse  
20 health impacts are rare, unlike tobacco use, which is legal. Individuals who  
21 are aged 21 or older should be allowed to access these naturally occurring  
22 substances without fear of criminal penalties.

## 23 **Arguments Against Proposition 122**

- 24 1) There are currently no approved therapies that use psychedelic mushrooms  
25 or other plant-based psychedelic substances, and the effects of them can  
26 vary widely from person to person, depending on the dose, frequency of use,  
27 and type of substance. Breakthrough Therapy designation does not mean  
28 that the use of psychedelic mushrooms is safe or recommended. Further,  
29 DMT, ibogaine, and mescaline have not received a similar designation, and,  
30 specifically, ibogaine may cause life-threatening heart conditions. Proposing  
31 a regulatory framework for the use of these substances suggests that they  
32 offer legitimate treatment before they have received federal approval,  
33 potentially putting people's health and public safety at risk.
- 34 2) Under the guise of health care, Proposition 122 legalizes drugs that have  
35 been illegal for over 50 years and forces local communities to allow use of  
36 these substances. It also provides broad protections for criminals by allowing  
37 convictions to be wiped from their records. By decriminalizing personal use,

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1 the black market for these drugs may expand and provide access to youth or  
2 expose people to psychedelic substances that are tainted with other drugs.  
3 This may create additional burdens on local governments which, under the  
4 measure, have limited say on what is allowed in their communities.

## 5 **Fiscal Impact for Proposition 122**

6 Proposition 122 will increase state revenue and spending, and potentially  
7 impacts local government spending, as described below. The state's budget  
8 year runs from July 1 through June 30.

9 **State revenue.** Under Proposition 122, state revenue will increase by about  
10 \$5.2 million per year in budget year 2024-25, \$5.6 million in 2025-26, and  
11 \$4.5 million per year in future years. This revenue is from facility and facilitator  
12 licensing fees; it is expected that fees will be set at a level needed to cover the  
13 costs of the program when fully implemented. In the first two years, additional  
14 fee revenue will be necessary to pay back the anticipated loan of state funds  
15 used to pay for initial start-up costs. The increase in revenue will depend on fee  
16 amounts and the number of license applications submitted. Revenue from  
17 licensing fees is subject to the state's TABOR limit.

18 **State spending.** Proposition 122 will increase costs in the Department of  
19 Regulatory Agencies (DORA) by an estimated \$0.7 million in budget year  
20 2022-23 and \$2.2 million in budget year 2023-24 to establish program rules,  
21 support the advisory board, and issue initial licenses prior to the start of the new  
22 regulatory program created by the measure. The measure requires a loan from  
23 the state General Fund be used to cover these start-up costs for the program,  
24 which will be paid back in subsequent years.

25 Once regulation begins, DORA will have costs of approximately \$5.2 million in  
26 budget year 2024-25 and \$5.6 million in budget year 2025-26 to regulate the  
27 manufacture, cultivation, testing, storage, transfer, transport, delivery, sale, use,  
28 and purchase of psychedelic mushrooms by licensed facilities. Actual  
29 expenditures will depend on the number of regulated entities participating in this  
30 industry. Estimated spending in budget years 2024-25 and 2025-26 also  
31 includes the repayment of state money used to cover costs in the first two years.

32 To the extent that Proposition 122 reduces the number of people convicted of  
33 crimes related to controlled substances that become regulated under the  
34 measure, costs in the criminal justice system will be reduced.

35 **Local government impact.** Local government workload and spending will  
36 increase to the extent local governments issue additional regulations on the  
37 operation of licensed facilities in their jurisdiction. County jail costs may be  
38 reduced to the extent fewer people are held in jails for offenses relating to  
39 controlled substances that become decriminalized and regulated under the  
40 measure.