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## Washington, DC Residents Announce Voter Initiative to Decriminalize Entheogenic Plants and Fungi

*Initiative Proposer and Supporters Go Before the DC Board of Elections February 5, 2020*

**WASHINGTON, DC** - The *Campaign to Decriminalize Nature DC* is a new group that proposes letting DC voters decide if entheogenic plants and fungi should become the “lowest priority” for law enforcement. **The new voter initiative will be on the public agenda on February 5, 2020 at 10:30am at the DC Board of Elections located 1015 Half Street, SE, Suite 750, Washington, DC.**

As part of a new wave of psychedelic therapy and decriminalization popularized, in part, by Michael Pollan’s ground-breaking book [How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence](#), concerned citizens have come together to change public policy in the nation’s capital.

Melissa Lavasani, a mother of two and a budget officer who works in the DC Government, is the proposer of the voter initiative. She decided to be an advocate for a change to District of Columbia policy after her experience consuming mushrooms, and later ayahuasca, for treatment-resistant and debilitating postpartum depression. “Plant medicines saved me and profoundly improved my wellbeing after numerous conventional approaches failed,” says Mrs. Lavasani. “I feel compelled to tell my story because I believe many other women could benefit from healing plants and fungi. These natural substances were demonized during Nixon’s ‘War on Drugs’, but today scientific research and personal experiences like my own should no longer be ignored by the law.”

Joining Melissa at the hearing will be the campaign’s general counsel, Joseph Sandler, who will argue the proposed language comports with DC law. Also in attendance to testify will be Marine veteran Wyly Gray of the group Veterans of War who will speak about the suicide epidemic facing the veteran community and how plant medicines offer effective, connecting, and lasting healing to combat this trend.

Jesse Gould of the Heroic Hearts Project will share how transformative and healing ayahuasca and other plant medicines can be for veterans battling PTSD, addiction and depression, in addition to epidemic rates of suicide due to the failure of conventional VA-approved treatments. Additionally, end of life caregivers who have witnessed how powerful these medicines are for healing end of life anxiety and distress, and advocates from jurisdictions that have made similar changes, are expected to attend and testify.

While the current numbers of arrests and convictions for natural plant medicines and fungi are unknown in the District, the *Campaign to Decriminalize Nature DC* believes people treating their depression, addiction or

PTSD should not have to worry about police breaking down their doors to take their life saving medicine. A decision on whether the voter initiative is proper subject matter is expected in early March 2020.

DC citizens recently formed a chapter of the national movement to *Decriminalize Nature*, which began in Oakland, California in early 2019. “People are no longer hiding in the shadows and are bravely speaking out publicly about how their choice to use plants and fungi considered to be controlled substances is best for their wellbeing,” adds Mrs. Lavasani.

Visit [www.DecrimNatureDC.org](http://www.DecrimNatureDC.org) to read the voter initiative and learn more about the campaign.