

Alaska State Senate

Senator Forrest Dunbar

Session:

Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 465-6944



Interim:

1500 W. Benson Blvd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907) 269-0246

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

SB 166: MENTAL HEALTH/PSYCHEDELIC MED. TASK FORCE

Senate Bill 166 proposes the establishment of the Alaska Mental Health and Psychedelic Medicine Task Force. Alaska's high veteran suicide rates and prevalence of domestic violence underscore the urgency of exploring innovative mental health treatments.

The Task Force will consist of a diverse group of experts and stakeholders tasked with exploring the integration of psychedelic-assisted therapies into Alaska's healthcare system. It will meet at least four times, submit a report of recommendations to the legislature and the governor by December 31st, 2024, and terminate at the convening of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature.

Research shows the effectiveness of psychedelic-assisted therapies in treating PTSD, depression, anxiety, and substance-use disorders, conditions highly prevalent among veterans. What barriers exist in implementing such therapies in Alaska? What regulations are needed for practitioners to ensure safe integration of psychedelic medicine? These are some of the questions the task force will explore.

The FDA is currently reviewing MDMA for treatment of PTSD, with approval expected by the end of this year. Additionally, advanced trials show that psilocybin and ibogaine are effective at treating PTSD, depression, anxiety, and TBI symptoms. Passing SB 166 is vital for Alaska to leverage these treatments in addressing mental health challenges. The task force represents a step towards pioneering mental health solutions. I urge your support for SB 166 to ensure that Alaska will be ready for the FDA's imminent approval of psychedelic medicine.