

March 13, 2024

Testimony for SB1009

My name is Tegy Thomas, I live in North Potomac, MD and am a constituent of District 15. I am a technology entrepreneur, parent, and well-being advocate. I am also an immigrant of India, who came to the United States as young child and subsequently experienced many forms of trauma, racism, and discrimination throughout my lived experiences. I have lived in India, New York City, New Jersey, and Washington, DC.

I attended the Horizons Psychedelic Conference in New York City in 2021 as well as the Washington, DC National Psychedelic Conference in Washington, DC in 2022. I encountered different psychedelic integration therapists, facilitators/guides, “shamans”, as well as different psychedelic societies in Maryland, Washington, DC and Virginia, but also experienced a lot of harm, racism and discrimination during my experiences within these groups and practitioners.

I urge and request the Maryland Task on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances to have someone who has experience, representation, and is an advocate from an underserved community as well as a survivor of trauma, racism, and discrimination.

I want to address the following facts:

- “Racism is a Serious Threat to the Public’s Health” – CDC
- “As the nation looks at its long, cruel history of systemic racism, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) acknowledges that our profession and this association have not always lived up to our mission of pursuing social justice for all. NASW apologizes for supporting policies and activities that have harmed people of color.” - Jun 17, 2021
- “American Psychiatric Association (APA), the oldest national physician association in the country, is taking an important step in addressing racism in psychiatry.” Jan 18, 2021
- “The American Psychological Association failed in its role leading the discipline of psychology, was complicit in contributing to systemic inequities, and hurt many through racism, racial discrimination, and denigration of people of color, thereby falling short on its mission to benefit society and improve lives. APA is profoundly sorry, accepts responsibility for, and owns the actions and inactions of APA itself, the discipline of psychology, and individual psychologists who stood as leaders for the organization and field.” - October 29, 2021
- “Nurses report seeing or hearing racism and experiencing discrimination from almost 80% of their patients, according to a survey released on Wednesday by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Asian, Black and Latino nurses are significantly more likely to experience racist microaggressions than their White peers, and they told researchers that patients frequently use racial slurs or question their credentials. Six in 10 nurses also reported they face discrimination from their colleagues as well, according to the survey. Of the nurses who have experienced racism or discrimination, 9 in 10 said it has affected their well-being and mental health. And even though an overwhelming majority of nurses faced some form of racism, few reported the incidents. Just 1 in 4 nurses

reported the discrimination they saw or experienced to management, the survey said.” - May 31, 2023 / CBS News

- “In 2005, the Institute of Medicine—a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization that now calls itself the National Academy of Medicine (NAM)—released a report documenting that the poverty in which black people disproportionately live cannot account for the fact that black people are sicker and have shorter life spans than their white complements. NAM found that “racial and ethnic minorities receive lower-quality health care than white people—even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable.” By “lower-quality health care,” NAM meant the concrete, inferior care that physicians give their black patients. NAM reported that minority persons are less likely than white persons to be given appropriate cardiac care, to receive kidney dialysis or transplants, and to receive the best treatments for stroke, cancer, or AIDS. It concluded by describing an “uncomfortable reality”: “some people in the United States were more likely to die from cancer, heart disease, and diabetes simply because of their race or ethnicity, not just because they lack access to health care.” – American Bar Association, Khiara M. Bridges is a professor of law and professor of anthropology at Boston University. She is the author of *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization* (2011) and *The Poverty of Privacy Rights* (2017).

My mother is a retired registered nurse from India and New York City. She is a member of the 1199SEIU union. I have educational as well as professional experiences in pharmacy, physical therapy, and other forms of mental health advocacy. I also have led a team as well as participated in attempting to create a mental health app during the 2020 MIT-COVID19 Hackathons. I have been a part of different advocacy organizations like Vision Zero/Families for Safe Streets in New York City, Montgomery County, MD, Alexandria, VA as well as organizations like National Alliance on Mental Illness and Decoding Dyslexia-MD.

I forward in the passing of SB1009 and continued progress to address trauma, racism, and discrimination within the psychedelic community here in Maryland.

Thank you,
Tegy Thomas