

Decriminalize Nature Philadelphia Mission, Strategy, Campaign, and Tactics

Decriminalize Nature Philadelphia's (DNP) mission is to improve human health and well-being by decriminalizing and expanding access to entheogenic plants and fungi through political and community organizing, education, and advocacy.

Our organization has focused on decriminalization rather than legalization because the profit-driven pharmaceutical industry model has thus far proven to be financially inaccessible to many of those in need, including the [~22% of Philadelphians living in poverty](#) who cannot afford to pay [\\$2,800-3,500](#) for a psychedelic-assisted therapy session in a licensed clinic with high overhead costs that are passed down to clients.

Our organization exists to advance local government recognition of our First Amendment right to connect to Nature on a deep psycho-spiritual level as well as provide risk reduction education resources for the community and City of Philadelphia. The medical/clinical model does not adequately accommodate these considerations, which must logically include the right to explore and expand one's spiritual beliefs by participating in ceremonies led by highly-credentialed Indigenous spiritual teachers or those who have apprenticed extensively under them.

DNP is a local, Philadelphia-based chapter of the national organization Decriminalize Nature based in Oakland, which successfully decriminalized natural entheogens in 2019. We operate in alignment with its core policy positions. DNP is an independent 501(c)4 lobbying organization, however, and we reserve the right to negotiate the details of our own resolution with the Philadelphia City Council and to raise funds accordingly. DNP formed as a 501(c)4 in February 2023 in support of community transparency and accountability and to further our ability to receive funding and donations both from individuals and institutions.

Our two-pronged strategy is comprised of two main elements:

- (1) We engage in direct lobbying of members of the Philadelphia City Council, the mayor, the district attorney, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and other pertinent local government departments, offices, and entities in pursuit of the passage of our resolution by the council.
- (2) We educate, organize, and mobilize Philadelphians at the grassroots level to engage with their City Council members, with a particular focus on those who have leadership positions on the two committees most relevant to us: the Public Safety (PS) Committee and the Public Health & Human Services (PHHS) Committee. The educational element of our strategy is intended to help our grassroots advocates become more effective communicators on this set of issues as well as to cultivate a culture of reverence, respect, and responsible use of these sacred, potent medicines. DNP also engages at the grassroots level (potential donors, influencers, et al.) to attract funding, media

coverage (including social media boosts), and/or bolster our connections with the city council.

Our campaign

- **Intermediate achievements:**

- In 2023, we had informative, tacitly supportive, or generally constructive meetings with the legislative directors (LDs) or other senior staffers for councilmembers Isaiah Thomas, Kendra Brooks, Jamie Gauthier, Jim Harranty, Curtis Jones, Mike Driscoll, Kenyatta Johnson, and Quetcy Lozada; as well as Mayor Kenney. We also had a meeting with CM Cindy Bass, then Majority Deputy Whip and chair of the PHHS; CM Jamie Gauthier, who committed to co-sponsoring a public hearing resolution and advocating on our behalf with CM Bass; and CM Jim Harranty, who unfortunately reneged without explanation in mid-September on his commitment to sponsor a public hearing. We are still working to decipher why he withdrew his sponsorship.
- Additionally, our chapter founder and former president had a promising conversation with District Attorney Larry Krasner's wife in an informal setting. We are hoping to cultivate that relationship in order to secure his support for decriminalization. Though he does not have legislative power, he has substantial influence on policy and its implementation. We have also reached out to the Philadelphia Police Department's public affairs office for comment.
- The response we received from the Philadelphia Health Commissioner's liaison as well as feedback we received from a councilmember led us to conclude that she had chosen to decline to take a position on the matter most likely due to her own political risk perception. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) is currently under an interim health commissioner, who we have reached out to via PDPH's Public Policy Advisor Ben Hartung. (Our previous point of contact was Public Liaison Jessica Baptiste, who has transitioned out of that role.)
- In the second half of March 2024 we had an encouraging meeting with the Legislative Director and Policy and Data Director for PHHS Chair CM Nina Ahmad. We anticipate a more in-depth meeting with her directly late April-early May to discuss her potential sponsorship of a public hearing.
- We have attracted nearly 3,370 followers on Instagram, 1,100 on Facebook, and 100 on LinkedIn. We have 772 signatures on our petition.

- Our investment in four experimental social media ad campaigns linking to our petition in March and April has so far yielded a return of 102 signatures at an average rate of \$4.74/signature, with the highest performing ad at \$2.92/signature. The national average for ballot referenda (which we are not pursuing but which is a useful comparison) was \$12.70/signature in 2022 and \$9.38 in 2023, according to Ballotpedia. We've spent nearly \$500 so far on these ads to reach ~39,500 Philadelphia residents or 2.54% of the population. Once we've concluded which perform the best, we intend to invest another \$11,000 on them, pending funding.
- **2024 Direct lobbying objectives and achievements:**
 - By end of Q2 2024, achieve meetings with all of the members of the PS and PHHS committees and/or their legislative directors, prioritizing the chairs and vice chairs of these committees, who are critical gatekeepers to the legislative process; as well as others who possess good rapport with members across the spectrum and who we have some indication may be receptive to or influenceable on policy reform on this issue. The current committee leaders are:
 - Nina Ahmad, PHHS Chair
 - Quetcy Lozada, PHHS & PS Vice Chair
 - Curtis Jones, PS Vice Chair
- **Media coverage achievements objectives:** We are aiming to maximize Philadelphia media coverage of our planned public hearing, which we are now aiming to make happen in the second quarter of 2024. We received positive coverage from [BillyPenn](#) on 7 August 2023. We have heard that the editor of Billy Penn would like to sustain coverage of our campaign. Our founder and former president also earned quotes in [Grid Magazine](#) and [Bloomberg](#) in December 2023.
- **Campaign Timeline:** We are aiming to secure a public hearing date via PHHS, PS, or a joint committee initiative by the second quarter of 2024 and get our resolution passed this year.

Our tactics and methods include:

- Phone calls and emails to city council members, their legislative directors, their chiefs of staff, their schedulers, or other pertinent members of their staff. We've provided a letter and call template for those who are newer to political advocacy and lobbying work to use as a reference but encourage people to incorporate their own stories, which one senior city council staffer told us he regarded as more compelling.
- Utilization of the petition web service ActionNetwork in order to gather signatures and short personal anecdotes to demonstrate the number of Philadelphians in support of our campaign and collect the information needed to keep them updated on it as well as

organize and mobilize them, including emails, phone numbers, and in some cases addresses to organize them by district. We have up to this point relied entirely on small donations and generate whatever political leverage we have primarily through our grassroots network.

- Use of email and social media channels—primarily Instagram but also Facebook and LinkedIn—to disseminate information on community events, cultivate culture and community; amplify pertinent scientific reports, op-eds, or encouraging articles on other cities and states that have decriminalized or are pursuing decriminalization; network and make use of opportunities to cross-promote aligned organizations; tag city councilmembers and journalists to generate awareness of our growing local movement; etc.
- Text channels to organize events and operations among our more committed core group.
- Monthly “Third Eye Thursday” in-person gatherings, generally every third Thursday of the month, which are intended to orient newer people to the movement as well as offer people opportunities to connect as a community and build rapport and camaraderie in an informal setting.
- Weekly/twice-monthly volunteer video conferences involving core group members and guidance and mentorship opportunities with Larry Norris, co-founder and board member of Decriminalize Nature. After many months of experimenting, we determined that regular videoconferences are the best way to maintain continuity and momentum within our core leadership without overburdening people with travel; though in-person events remain vital for cultivating deeper relationships.
- Donor appeals and merch sales, including, at present, t-shirts and coffee mugs, accessible directly on our website and promoted in our emails and social media channels.
- Use of Google spreadsheets and docs to track our calls and emails to city council city and meeting dates as well as enable us to review summaries of the meetings and preserve organizational knowledge continuity if leaders transition out
- Petitioning at farmer’s markets and other community events to expand our grassroots advocacy network, which we’d like to expand the scope and establish the regularity of, pending funding.

2024 Budget

Budget Line	Investment	Revenue
Executive Director salary	\$32,000 (six-month contract)	
Community coordinator to organize and mobilize residents to sustain their engagement with their local elected representatives	\$15,000 (six-month contract)	
Community engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Petitioners: 9 farmers markets/week x 26 weeks (6 months) x 2 petitioners/market x 4 hours x \$20/hour ● Grassroots Organizing Leader (to train, motivate, and evaluate, petitioners) ● Petitioning/tabling materials (table, banner): 9 tables and banners ~\$100/setup 	\$37,440 \$20,000 (six-month contract) \$900	
Website (including merch service interface) + email distro service (5,000 emails/month)	\$415/yr (increase from \$324 in 2023) + \$311/year = \$716	

Domain	\$24.85/yr	
Petition Service (ActionNetwork)	\$10/month=\$120/yr	
Coffee and pastry tab for work+ community-building gatherings (e.g. phone banking/emailing)	\$1,000	
Printify DNP branded content store	\$29 monthly x 12= \$348 annually	Projected online merch sales revenue: \$2,000 (2023 was \$449 for May-December)
Social media ad campaigns	\$11,500	
Total	~\$119,000	\$2,000
Investments Minus Anticipated Revenue	\$117,000	