

Senate Bill 914

Hospitals - Overdoses - Testing for Fentanyl

Individual Providing Testimony: Melanie Yates, SB 914 Advocate

Position: Favorable.

Dear Chairwoman Griffith and the Finance Committee,

My name is Melanie Yates, I am a Master's of Social Work student and I am the advocate behind SB 914.

On October 14, 2022, my partner Josh died from an overdose. At the hospital, Josh was pronounced brain dead. Several days later, we got his urine drug screen back, which showed only cocaine, despite his family and I finding fentanyl in his apartment. It turns out the hospital hadn't tested for fentanyl, a test that costs on average, 75 cents to run.

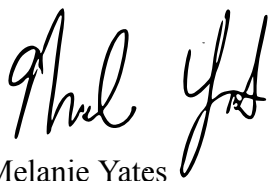
According to a Center for Substance Abuse Research study, only 5% of all toxicology screens are being tested for fentanyl, with a more than 40 percent positivity rate. SB 914 would require that fentanyl be included in the standard urine drug screening in hospitals. It is not mandating what a healthcare provider should or should not do, it is simply saying that if a provider in a hospital chooses to run a urine drug screening, that fentanyl should be included in that test.

This bill has a 3-fold impact:

1. It will better inform the Opioid Operational Command Center's data on nonfatal overdoses, if we're not testing for fentanyl then we are vastly undercounting the number of overdoses in Maryland.
2. It will inform those who unknowingly ingest fentanyl and allow those individuals to make better decisions and inform others in their community.
3. It will close the patient care gap that can occur if a provider misses the sign of a fentanyl overdose.

This bill is a simple, logical step we can take towards addressing the fentanyl crisis in Maryland, and I truly do believe it has the ability to save hundreds of lives. Thank you, and I urge you to support SB 914.

Sincerely,



Melanie Yates