



Maryland Veterinary Medical Association (MDVMA)

Established in 1886, MDVMA is a volunteer, non-profit organization comprised primarily of licensed Maryland Veterinarians.

SB0435 - Public Health - Medetomidine and Xylazine Consumer Protection Act

Committee: Finance

February 9, 2026

MDVMA Position: OPPOSE

On behalf of the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association and its members we oppose and strongly urge an unfavorable report of HB417.

It is acknowledged that the prevention of abuse of Xylazine and Medetomidine products is a noble goal. We do not believe this bill will do that. Further, as a profession we are committed to the responsible use of these products. There are extensive efforts being made at the Federal level to help ensure Xylazine is used appropriately. The American Veterinary Medical Association has endorsed the Combating Illicit Xylazine Act to make Xylazine a DEA Schedule III product.

The problem with this proposed legislation as written is it may endanger the ability of veterinarians to have access to this important medication in our state. There are no alternative products available to veterinarians comparable and if regulations are placed that make it burdensome for distributors to provide it within our state they have warned, given the very little profit margin of the product, they will make it unavailable. If Maryland veterinarians cannot have access to these medications constituents are going to notice and feel the effect immediately. Xylazine, is an inexpensive, effective and safe sedative used commonly in horse medicine; without it, horse owners will notice a 7-fold increase in the cost of sedation. Horses are commonly sedated for a myriad of routine and surgical practices. The cost to the equine industry if these products aren't available will be profound. Our ability to treat these important animals safely will be hindered. Foregoing sedation is not an option as it would threaten the life of the veterinary practitioners providing the care.

Xylazine is particularly valuable in livestock medicine as well. The cost to sedate livestock as required with these products for common and frequent procedures is very low. There are no alternative products available. Restricting access to this important sedative for livestock will be of profound impact. Our ability to care for livestock practicably and safely in the state will be remarkably hindered. Veterinarians must be able to safely restrain and sedate livestock and anything that compromises our ability to access these medications will endanger our food supply and security. There really are no safe alternatives in ruminant species and even if there were, of the available classes of sedatives on the market producers in the state are not going to afford them. The cost of using alternatives is dramatically higher!

MARYLAND VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Even if manufacturers do not restrict our access to these products in response to the passage of this legislation there are additional important considerations of severe consequence that we believe requires strong opposition to this bill as written. Maryland is home to several important institutions that conduct animal research. Provision of individual identification to verify age upon purchase seems reasonable until one considers that individuals who work in research institutions and purchase the products for legitimate use could be personally harmed if their sensitive information is exposed to members of the public who may be radicalized to do harm to individuals of our research community. There is plenty of historical record from incidents around the nation to show that activists will target individuals that work in animal research. It is a well-regarded risk to individuals that work within research that they protect their individual identity for their own personal safety and it is reasonable to presume that individuals responsible for procurement of these products in such institutions will be unwilling to provide identification thus stifling the ability of these institutions to continue their work.

These sedatives are used almost exclusively in veterinary medicine. There is very little evidence to support diversion of these products from legitimate veterinary sources. The Drug Enforcement Agency has identified the source of the majority of xylazine found within illicit drugs to be powdered xylazine primarily from China. There are no powdered Xylazine products licensed for use within the United States.

Distributors of Xylazine products selling to veterinary providers already ensure the individuals purchasing them own or operate legitimate institutions by verifying state, CDS and DEA licensure for those purchasing the product. There is no reason to require personal identification from individuals procuring these products for legitimate veterinary use from legitimate, licensed suppliers.

The Maryland Veterinary Medical Association is committed to keeping Maryland citizens safe. While we do not believe many licensed veterinarians currently distribute these sedatives to clients, and we certainly discourage it as best practice; we could support amendments that restrict the ability for veterinarians to do so within the state. In fact, if the drug is scheduled as we expect it will be at the Federal level, veterinarians would be unable to legally distribute it to their clientele and this legislation would serve only to hinder distribution specifically to Maryland-based veterinarians. We could support a requirement of any veterinarian who does legally distribute these sedatives to collect the identification and use verification documents required as proposed by this legislation. We would ask for licensed veterinarians, research institutions and legitimate practitioners utilizing these sedatives to be exempt from providing it to legitimate manufactures and wholesale distributors for the aforementioned reasons and also because the distributors would find maintaining the records specific to Maryland veterinarians overly burdensome. For these reasons we strongly urge an unfavorable report of this bill as written.

Sincerely,

Matthew Weeman DVM MS
Legislative Committee Chair Maryland Veterinary Medical Association