Maryland Alliance for
Sensible Drug Policy
LIVED EXPERIENCE. REAL SOLUTIONS.

February 10th, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair, House Health Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 417 - Public Health - Medetomidine and Xylazine Consumer Protection Act - UNFAVORABLE

To Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Committee:

The Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy is a state-wide advocacy group led by people with lived or living experience with substance use, and we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 417.

The spread of xylazine and medetomidine in the drug supply is a serious public health crisis. Federal and public health agencies have warned that xylazine, and increasingly medetomidine, are being found mixed with illicit fentanyl, raising overdose risk and complicating response. However, this bill targets the wrong supply chain and will not meaningfully reduce the presence of these substances in Maryland communities.

The xylazine found in the illicit market is not coming from Maryland farm stores or veterinary practices. It is overwhelmingly manufactured overseas and imported for use as a cheap cutting agent in fentanyl. DEA has described illicit xylazine entering the U.S. in solid form from China and other countries, among other pathways.[i] The FDA has also taken steps specifically aimed at restricting unlawful imports of xylazine active pharmaceutical ingredients and finished dosage forms entering the United States for illicit purposes.[ii] By contrast, products sold legally in Maryland are FDA-approved liquid sedatives intended for large-animal veterinary use.

These are distinct markets, and there is limited evidence that retail diversion is driving overdoses. According to the DEA, illicit xylazine powder can be purchased online for as little as $6 to $20 per kilogram, making it far cheaper and easier for traffickers to acquire bulk powder than to purchase small, regulated liquid vials at retail prices.[iii] The same is true for medetomidine, which is also sold in bulk online. In other words, this bill would not disrupt the low-cost bulk supply that fuels adulteration in the illicit market.

However, it would add new hurdles for legitimate regulated sales. This bill imposes new regulatory burdens and fines of up to $6500 for record-keeping violations on veterinarians and agricultural retailers who did not create this crisis. These requirements may lead small

businesses to stop carrying essential medications altogether, harming Maryland farmers while doing nothing to disrupt illicit drug trafficking. In practice, HB 417 requires businesses to collect and store copies of IDs and proof-of-use documentation for every sale, which creates administrative burden, privacy risk, and real exposure to penalties for paperwork errors, even when there is no illicit intent.

HB 417 is a well-intentioned but ineffective response to the overdose crisis. It penalizes legitimate commerce while leaving the actual source of illicit xylazine and medetomidine untouched. Maryland should instead focus on proven solutions to fight overdoses. That means expanding drug checking so people can detect fentanyl and adulterants like xylazine and make safer choices in real time. It also means scaling low-barrier wound care and peer-led outreach, which are often the first point of contact for people who are using and can connect them to other life-saving services. Maryland should also move forward with overdose prevention centers, which prevent fatal overdoses and create a pathway to services for people who may not otherwise engage with the health system. And Maryland should invest in more evidence-based treatment and recovery support services, so when someone is ready for help, there's actually a timely, effective place to go.

For these reasons, we urge an **unfavorable report on HB 417**.

Respectfully submitted,

James Reece Peak III
Member, Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy

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[i] Drug Enforcement Administration. (2023a, September 22). *DEA and DHS issue joint update on sources of illicit xylazine.* https://www.dea.gov/stories/2023/2023-09/2023-09-22/dea-and-dhs-issue-joint-update-sources-illicit-xylazine

[ii] U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2023, February 28). *FDA takes action to restrict unlawful import of xylazine.* https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-takes-action-restrict-unlawful-import-xylazine

[iii] Drug Enforcement Administration. (2022, October). *The growing threat of xylazine and its mixture with illicit drugs* (DEA-DCI-DIR-001-23). https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/The%20Growing%20Threat%20of%20Xylazine%20and%20its%20Mixture%20with%20Illicit%20Drugs.pdf