

Dept. of Justice: Attorney General Kaul joins bipartisan coalition to protect communities from the dangers of illicit xylazine

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today joined a bipartisan coalition of 39 attorneys general in urging Congressional leadership to pass the Combating Illicit Xylazine Act (H.R.1839/S.993), which would provide critical measures to combat the widespread illicit use and trafficking of xylazine and help prevent xylazine-related deaths. Today’s letter comes following a surge in overdose deaths nationwide related to xylazine, a potent veterinary medication that has been widely mixed with opioids like fentanyl and is easily obtainable online. Over the past few months, multiple federal agencies, including the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) have issued public alerts about the dangers of xylazine. Most recently, the White House declared fentanyl-adulterated or -associated xylazine (FAAX) an “emerging threat” to the nation.

“Xylazine poses a significant danger to the public, compounding the major harm to public health that the prevalence of fentanyl is causing,” said AG Kaul. “We must act to address this danger to our communities.”

Xylazine is only approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a veterinary medicine used to sedate and relieve pain in large animals. In humans, xylazine is known to depress breathing and heart rate, lower blood pressure, and cause unconsciousness, necrosis, and even death. Xylazine is not an opioid, thus existing medications like naloxone are not effective in reversing the drug’s effects even if used with opioids.

According to the DEA, there was a dramatic increase in xylazine-related overdose deaths across the United States between 2020 and 2021, with an increase of 1,127 percent in the Southern region, 750 percent in the Western region, 516 percent in the Mideast region, and 103 percent in the Northeast region. Additionally, in 2022, approximately 23 percent of fentanyl powder and seven percent of fentanyl pills seized by the DEA contained xylazine. To prevent the proliferation of FAAX in communities and keep people safe, Attorney General Kaul and the coalition emphasized the importance of the measures outlined in the Combating Illicit Xylazine Act, which includes:

- Classifying the illicit use of xylazine as a Schedule III drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act;
- Allowing the DEA to track the manufacturing and sales of xylazine to ensure that it is not diverted;
- Requiring the U.S. Attorney General, acting through the DEA and in coordination with the FDA Commissioner, to submit a report to Congress detailing the prevalence, risks, and recommendations on how to regulate the illicit use of xylazine; and
- Ensuring all salts, isomers, and other forms of xylazine are also covered when restricting the drug's illicit use.

Joining Attorney General Kaul in sending today's letter are the attorneys general of Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.