

ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 4057

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 13, 2024

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 4057.

As amended, this bill requires hospitals that conduct a urine drug screening in the course of treating a patient to include in the screening testing for fentanyl, xylazine, and any drug for which the Commissioner of Health has issued a public health alert on the risk of overdose from the illicit use of that drug. If the urine drug screening detects fentanyl, xylazine, or any drug for which the Commissioner of Health has issued a public health alert on the risk of overdose from the illicit use of that drug, the hospital will be required to report the test results in a form and manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Health.

Both fentanyl, which is a powerful synthetic opioid, and xylazine, which is a potent animal tranquilizer, have been associated with sharp increases in overdose deaths, exacerbating mortality rates in the already-deadly opioid epidemic. Both fentanyl and xylazine have been found in other street drugs, including heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, with increasing frequency, and both drugs can increase the risk of a fatal overdose. Although some users of street drugs may specifically seek out fentanyl, xylazine, or both, others may be at increased risk of overdose because they are not aware these drugs may be present in the substances they are consuming.

Currently, hospital urine drug screenings do not routinely test for fentanyl or xylazine, which may result in delays in the patient receiving the level or type of treatment needed to reverse an overdose.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments provide that nothing in the bill is to be construed to preclude a hospital without analyzer equipment for urinalysis from utilizing drug test strips to comply with the bill's provisions. The committee amendments provide for testing of any drug for which the Commissioner of Health has issued a public health alert on overdoses.