

Legalizing Xylazine Test Strips

LC 2: Caracole

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Who is Caracole?

- Located in **Northside**
- Non-profit organization
- Serve HIV positive and other susceptible populations
- Offer free health services, testing, wound-care kits
- **Harm reduction** vending machine
- Concerned by rise of xylazine in drug supply



Advocacy Project

- Xylazine is a horse tranquilizer cut into street drugs
- Xylazine causes chronic, necrotic skin wounds despite method of intake
- From 2019-2022, overdoses involving xylazine increased by 273%.
- 73% of people do not want to use xylazine
- Need for xylazine test strips to avoid accidental drug use

Our Goal:

1. **Legalize xylazine** test strips
2. **Decrease harmful effects** xylazine has caused in our community

Social Determinant of Health

Access to Health Services

- Drug checking equipment is emerging as an **essential public health service**
- Legalizing xylazine test strips would increase access to public health services and preventative healthcare for Ohioans



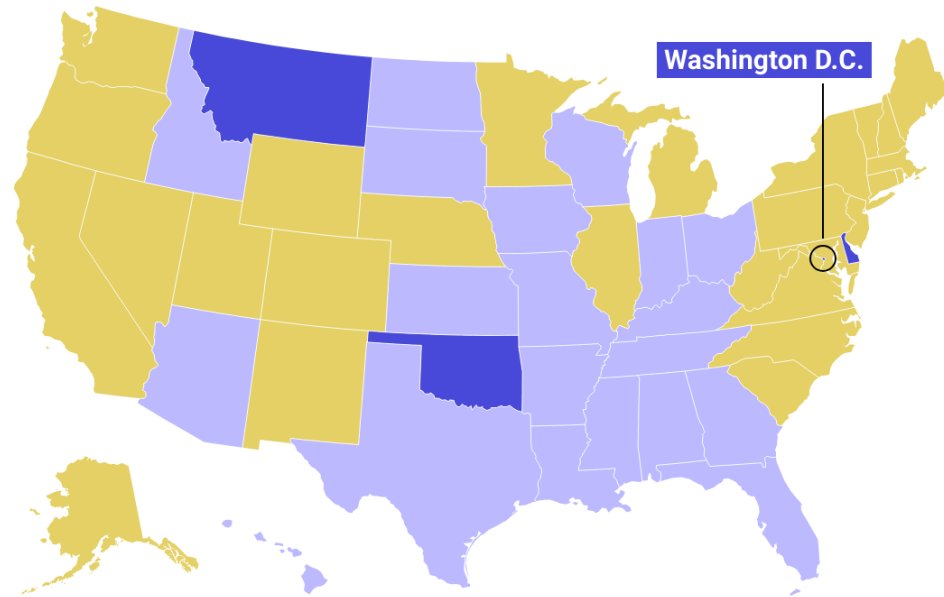
Data Analysis and Community

- September 28, 2012 version of the Ohio Revised Code Section 2925.14 (A)(5) states: “Testing equipment for identifying, or analyzing the strength, effectiveness, or purity of, a controlled substance;” is illegal.
- April 2023 revision of the law (D)(4) now states: “Division (C)(1) of this section does not apply to a person's use, or possession with purpose to use, any drug testing strips to determine the presence of fentanyl or a fentanyl-related compound.”
- Fentanyl testing strips were legalized to reduce harm surrounding this drug; testing strips for other drugs (including xylazine) are still illegal
- Xylazine has been found in 90% of illicit opioid samples (Ohio Board of Pharmacy)

Policy Status in Ohio

Xylazine test strips subject to
drug paraphernalia laws:

Yes No, with some restrictions No



Note: Xylazine test strips may remain subject to a criminal penalty depending on how it's used or who possesses it in the states, with some restrictions.

Data source: Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association, January 2024

April 2023:

- Senate Bill 288

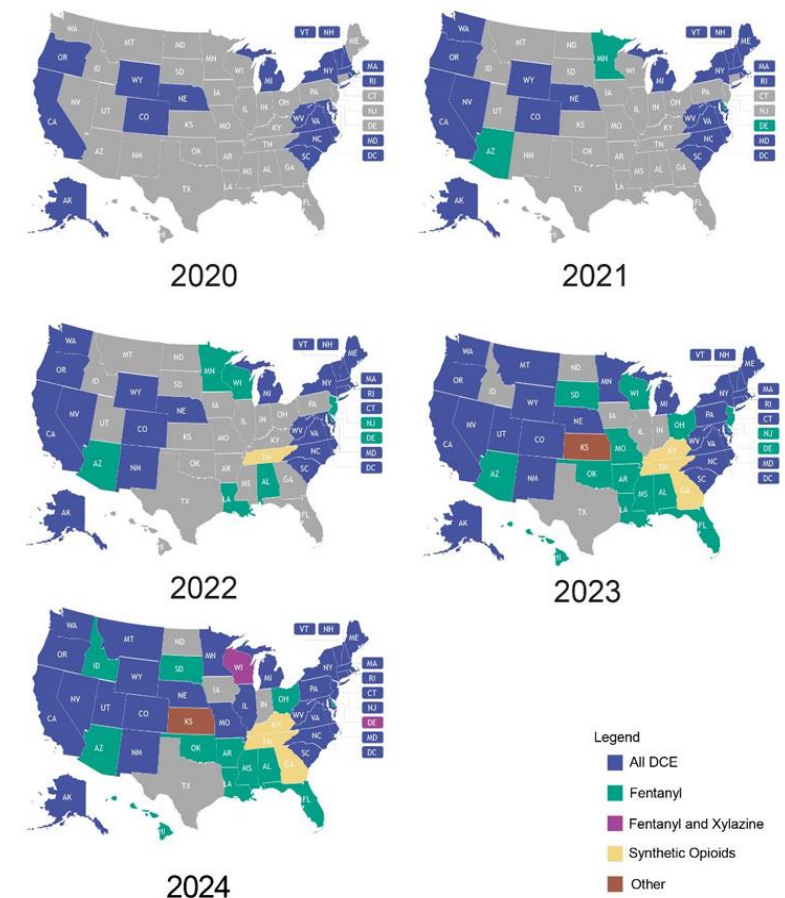
- Fentanyl test strips are no longer considered drug paraphernalia
- Does **not** decriminalize xylazine test strips
- Possession of xylazine test strips is still illegal as they are considered drug paraphernalia

Rationale for Policy Modification

- Fentanyl test strips have led to safer usage behaviors, **reducing the risk of overdose.**
- **States are rapidly modifying their laws** to increase access to xylazine test strips.
- Legalizing xylazine test strips encourages their dispersion and use.

For Ohio, **legalizing xylazine test strips** a logical next step to decrease the burden xylazine has on our community and **promote Cincinnati's public health**

Figure 1: States with laws permitting possession of DCE, by year



Proposed Advocacy Strategy

To encourage legislators to include an **exemption of xylazine test strips in drug paraphernalia laws**, we will:

1. Partner with local healthcare professionals and harm reduction agencies to garner support for our cause.
2. Identify individuals who would be willing to share stories of how they've been affected by ingesting xylazine unknowingly.
3. Using data-driven advocacy along with personal testimonials, we hope to engage legislators and draft an updated exemption to **Section 2925.14 that legalizes xylazine test strips**.

Ask for Support

With your help, we can address the issues xylazine poses to Cincinnati by

- **Reducing the harm caused by xylazine**
- **Protecting Cincinnati's most vulnerable residents** from this emerging public health threat
- **Support us in updating legislature**, and allowing us to advocate for change

We urge you to encourage policymakers to **legalize xylazine testing** and provide funding for public health campaigns that **educate the community** about its dangers.

References

Michaels, N.L., Bista, S., Short Mejia, A. et al. Xylazine awareness and attitudes among people who use drugs in Ohio, 2023–2024. *Harm Reduct J* 21, 182 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-024-01097-5>

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