



# Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

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January 23, 2025

The Honorable Terry Roy  
Chairman  
Committee of Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
House of Representatives  
107 North Main Street, LOB Rooms 202-204  
Concord, NH 03301

**Re: NNESAM's Support for HB 226, legislation relative to the use of drug-checking equipment (DCE)**

Dear Chairman Roy,

On behalf of the Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine (NNESAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and other clinicians in New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont who specialize in addiction treatment, we write today to express our strong support for HB 226. This bipartisan legislation would strengthen legal protections for the use and possession of drug-checking equipment (DCE), like fentanyl test strips and xylazine test strips. Additionally, HB 226 would also increase the authority of state and municipal public health departments to distribute DCE to the highest-risk communities.

At present, fentanyl and xylazine have become firmly established in the illicit drug supply, posing a significant risk to our citizens. DCE-like fentanyl test strips and xylazine test strips are easily accessible and inexpensive tests that can be utilized by persons who use drugs to detect the presence of fentanyl with high accuracy.<sup>1</sup> While New Hampshire has made modest progress in stemming further increases in our drug overdose rate,<sup>2</sup> far too many of our fellow citizens are still losing their lives to overdose. Further, the morbidity in terms of serious, difficult-to-treat skin ulcers, in addition to its respiratory depression effect, makes the avoidance of xylazine, if possible, critically important. As such, we must do more for our most vulnerable residents and ensure that the risk from overdose and other morbidities is minimized as much as possible.

Additionally, enhanced accessibility to and awareness of fentanyl and xylazine test strips promotes public safety. The testing of pre-obtained drugs is an important harm-reduction tool to decrease the risk of overdose deaths. Based on the results of these tests, individuals can take precautions accordingly. These precautions can prove lifesaving. Further, research suggests that these tests are associated with positive changes in drug use behavior and desire to seek treatment.<sup>3 4</sup> As such, people who use drugs and public health programs must be able to easily obtain and use this vital equipment without fear of possible legal consequences. HB 226 is an important step towards enhancing the availability and protection for the use of DCE.

NNESAM is proud to support HB 226 and commends its bipartisan group of sponsors for seeking evidence-based solutions to the overdose epidemic. We urge all members of the

committee to join us in support of advancing this bill to a full floor vote as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact our leadership if there is any other assistance or clarification that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Clifton F. Lord, MD, DFASAM  
President, Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine

CC:

The Honorable Jennifer Rhodes  
The Honorable Ricky Devoid  
The Honorable Linda Harriott-Gathright  
The Honorable Richard Lascelles  
The Honorable David Meuse  
The Honorable Pete Morency  
The Honorable Nancy Murphy  
The Honorable Jodi Newell  
The Honorable Ray Newman  
The Honorable Kathleen Paquette  
The Honorable Mark Proulx  
The Honorable Matt Sabourin dit Choinière  
The Honorable Buzz Scherr  
The Honorable Brian Valerino

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<sup>1</sup> Appel, G., Farmer, B., & Avery, J. (2021). *Fentanyl Test Strips Empower People And Save Lives-So Why Aren't They More Widespread?* Health Affairs. <https://doi.org/10.1377/forefront.20210601.974263>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt476/files/documents2/dmi-2023-overview-updated-12-2024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Peiper, N. C., Clarke, S. D., Vincent, L. B et al (2019). *Fentanyl test strips as an opioid overdose prevention strategy: Findings from a Syringe Services Program in the Southeastern United States*. International Journal of Drug Policy, 63, 122-128. [hllRs:// hllRs://doi.o,rg/10.1016/i.drugpo.2018.08.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2018.08.007)

<sup>4</sup> Krieger, M. S., Goedel, W. C., Buxton, et al; (2018). *Use of rapid fentanyl test strips among young adults who use drugs*. International Journal of Drug Policy, 61, 52-58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2018.09.009>