

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 250963)

RESOLUTION

Calling on the Pennsylvania General Assembly to add medetomidine to the list of controlled substances in Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia continues to face an ongoing drug epidemic that threatens public health and safety. The Department of Public Health reported about 1,300 fatal overdoses in 2023, with early data suggesting a slight decline in 2024, though the rate remains among the highest in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Medetomidine is a veterinary sedative that produces deep sedation, analgesia, and muscle relaxation through activation of α -adrenergic receptors. It is licensed only for veterinary use and has not been approved for human application or consumption; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Department of Public Health has reported the rapid emergence of medetomidine in the City's illicit drug supply. Beginning in mid-2024, medetomidine largely replaced xylazine as a common adulterant in fentanyl. By November 2024, approximately 87 percent of the illicit drug samples tested contained medetomidine; and

WHEREAS, Medetomidine is estimated to be 100 to 200 times stronger than xylazine and, like xylazine, does not respond to opioid receptors. As a result, while naloxone (Narcan) can reverse the opioid effects in a mixed overdose, it cannot reverse the deep sedation or slowed heart rate and breathing caused by medetomidine; and

WHEREAS, There are currently no rapid test strips available to detect medetomidine, and most toxicology panels do not include it, leaving patients, providers, and public-health agencies without real-time data. Medetomidine remains unscheduled under both Pennsylvania law and the federal Controlled Substances Act, making it easily accessible through veterinary suppliers and overseas chemical vendors; and

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WHEREAS, Medetomidine is not currently scheduled as a controlled substance in Pennsylvania, making it difficult for public health and law enforcement agencies to track, regulate, or respond to its growing presence in the illicit drug supply; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia has a duty to protect residents from emerging synthetic and veterinary sedatives being introduced into street drugs, and to advocate for state-level action to ensure appropriate monitoring, classification, and harm-reduction strategies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby call on the Pennsylvania General Assembly to add medetomidine to the list of controlled substances in Pennsylvania.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the Thirteenth day of November, 2025.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Lozada

Sponsored by: Council President Johnson, Councilmembers Lozada, Phillips, Harrity, Driscoll, Squilla and Ahmad