



# ST. JOHNS COUNTY **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**ROBERT A. HARDWICK, SHERIFF**

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13 June 2025

Congressman John Rutherford  
United States House of Representatives  
1711 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Rutherford:

I am writing on behalf of the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office to express our deep concern about the President's FY 2026 Budget proposal, specifically the proposal to move the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to the Department of Justice, and to cut the program by 35%. I respectfully submit that this proposal will have the unintended consequence of weakening the President's vision to build a coordinated national public safety strategy.

The current structure of HIDTAs under ONDCP leadership is a proven model of collaborative policing that has saved lives, dismantled violent drug trafficking organizations, and provided a unique platform that has built lasting partnerships among federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies throughout the nation. The record of agency collaboration speaks for itself. In 2024, on a national level, HIDTA has removed over \$17.6 billion worth of drugs from our communities.

HIDTA is led by an executive board that includes the key federal, state, and local law enforcement leaders in the region. This structure is especially important as it provides state and local leaders with an equal voice in designing and implementing the most effective public safety strategies to address drug threats and related crimes of violence in their communities.

As currently structured and funded, HIDTA, will also be in a critical position to support the President's new Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTF). These regional task forces, co-led by local leaders from Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), will provide an unprecedented opportunity to create a comprehensive and coordinated national public safety strategy, like the counterterrorism model created by the Joint Terrorism Task Forces.

Simply put, this is not the time to weaken the nation's most effective multi-agency framework for addressing the threats posed by cartel-driven drug trafficking. We urge Congress to preserve ONDCP's authority over HIDTA and fully fund the HIDTA program. I respectfully request your leadership in advocating for a reversal of this budget proposal.

On behalf of our Agency, we thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We value your support in ensuring these programs remain equipped to address the ongoing drug crisis and to protect the health and safety of our communities.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Hardwick  
Sheriff

