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June 11, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of more than 1,400 members of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, representing over 460 agencies, to express our deep concern about possible changes to the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program included in a portion of the president's FY 2026 budget proposal. Specifically, we are alarmed by the 35% funding cut and the transfer of the HIDTA program from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to the Department of Justice.

Illinois is directly served by two HIDTA regions: the Chicago HIDTA, which supports 22 critical initiatives across several counties, and the Midwest HIDTA, which contributes to broader regional enforcement strategies. These programs provide critical support and resources to combat drug trafficking and its harmful consequences by targeting high-level drug trafficking operations and improving multi-agency coordination. These programs are not just abstract ideas, but lifelines to communities overwhelmed by the consequences of drug trafficking and drug-related violence. In 2024 alone, HIDTA initiatives contributed to removing more than \$17.6 billion worth of drugs from our communities nationwide.

The unparalleled success of the HIDTA program is due to its regional autonomy, impartial executive board governance, and the independent oversight provided by ONDCP. The current ONDCP framework empowers local agencies to develop targeted responses to evolving drug threats, a flexibility that could be lost under a more centralized DOJ model. HIDTA's collaborative policing has saved lives, dismantled drug trafficking organizations, and built lasting partnerships among federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement.

Moving HIDTA under the Department of Justice would strip away the neutrality that enables trust among diverse enforcement entities and reduce the local control that has made this program so effective. A 35% budget cut would devastate operations, shutter investigative initiatives, and put lives at risk, especially in vulnerable communities already facing increased drug-related harm.

This is not just about funding lines in the federal budget. It is about saving lives, preserving hard-won partnerships, and maintaining the tools our agencies need to protect communities. We respectfully urge you to carefully consider the consequences of these proposed changes. HIDTA's value lies in its ability to unify federal, state, tribal, and local agencies under a neutral and cooperative structure. Maintaining this structure and current funding levels is essential to sustaining public safety across Illinois and the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kenny Winslow".

Chief (ret.) Kenny Winslow
Executive Director, Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police (ILACP)