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The Honorable Josh Hawley  
Senator  
United States Senate  
381 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20510

**RE: Opposition to the Proposed Transfer of the HIDTA Program from ONDCP to DOJ (FY 2026 Budget Proposal)**

Dear Senator Hawley,

On behalf of the Metro Chiefs and Sheriffs Association, representing a broad coalition of Missouri and Kansas municipal and county law enforcement leaders across the Kansas City Metropolitan Area, I write to express our strong opposition to the proposed transfer of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), as outlined in the Administration's FY 2026 Budget Proposal.

As law enforcement executives working daily to address the evolving threat of drug trafficking and overdose deaths in our communities, we know firsthand the vital role the HIDTA program plays in fostering collaboration, targeting resources, and producing measurable results. The current structure under ONDCP ensures HIDTA remains a neutral, strategically aligned, and regionally responsive initiative—one that prioritizes state and local autonomy in setting enforcement and prevention priorities.

The proposed shift would have negative consequences for jurisdictions across the country, including:

1. **Loss of State and Local Autonomy:** Placing HIDTA under OJP—a grant-administration office without an enforcement mission—would erode the local control that enables tailored responses to regional threats.
2. **Disruption to Interagency Coordination:** HIDTA's balanced partnership among federal, state, and local agencies could be upended by a more federally driven model, risking mission drift and operational inefficiency.
3. **Operational Instability:** HIDTA-funded task forces conduct complex, long-term investigations. The proposed restructuring could delay funding, hinder continuity, and jeopardize ongoing operations.
4. **Weakening of Public Health Integration:** Programs like the Overdose Response Strategy, which connect law enforcement with public health experts, rely on HIDTA's unique structure to function effectively—something unlikely to be sustained within DOJ's framework.

5. **Lack of Justification for Change:** The HIDTA program enjoys strong bipartisan support, clean audits, and demonstrable success. There is no clear problem the proposed change seeks to solve—only unnecessary risk.

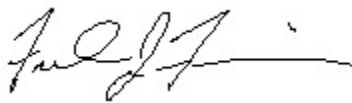
More than 90% of the Midwest HIDTA's \$15.9 million budget directly supports state and local enforcement initiatives. The Administration's proposal for a 35% national cut would remove approximately \$5 million from the Midwest region alone—funding that supports lifesaving interdiction and prevention efforts in both urban and rural jurisdictions.

A reduction of this magnitude would significantly impair our ability to support investigations, share intelligence, and carry out joint operations that keep our neighborhoods safe. Local Missouri and Kansas police departments and sheriff's offices across the region rely on HIDTA for its infrastructure, partnerships, and proven track record of success in reducing the impact of drug trafficking.

We respectfully urge you to maintain the HIDTA program within ONDCP and reject the proposed transfer to DOJ. Doing so will preserve a proven, collaborative model that enables flexible, accountable, and locally driven solutions to one of the most pressing public safety threats of our time.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support of the law enforcement community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred J. Farris", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Chief Fred J. Farris,  
President, Metro Chiefs and Sheriffs Association