



## MARYLAND SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION, INC.



**Sheriff James DeWees**  
**Carroll County, Md.**  
**MSA President**

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Sheriffs' Association, Inc. (MSA) to urge your continued support of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program, under the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The President's Fiscal year (FY) 2026 budget proposal has cut the national program by \$102 million and seeks to move the program from ONDCP to the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP). The move and budget reduction would dramatically impact the safety of Maryland citizens, and we are urging you to restore the funding to the current \$298 million level and keep the program within ONDCP.

The MSA, comprised of 24 Sheriffs in the state of Maryland are unified in support of the ONDCP and the national HIDTA program. As our nation continues to grapple with a devastating drug overdose crisis, ONDCP's leadership and the support of our regional HIDTA's is more critical than ever. The HIDTA Program, which has long been a key component of our national drug control strategy, plays an essential role in coordinating efforts at all levels of law enforcement-federal, state, local, and tribal-to combat the growing threats posed by drug trafficking and its consequences.

The Washington/Baltimore HIDTA was designated in 1994 and serves the state of Maryland. There are currently 24 law enforcement initiatives W/B HIDTA initiatives in the state of Maryland which include participation by 14 Sheriffs' offices and 24 local police departments supporting 255 personnel from local/state law enforcement agencies. Last year, these groups were responsible for disrupting and dismantling 51 violent drug trafficking organizations. They seized 63 kilograms of fentanyl and over 343,000 dosage units, 476 kilograms of cocaine, and 78 kilograms of methamphetamine for a value of over \$18 million and seized an additional \$13.5 million in cash and assets.

The HIDTA Program's unique structure fosters collaboration and a balanced approach by providing equal representation from federal, state, and local criminal justice leaders. This balanced oversight, with neutral administration from ONDCP, ensures that HIDTA task forces are responsive to regional threats and can adapt quickly to emerging challenges. The program also facilitates vital intelligence sharing and cooperation among over 20,000 law enforcement personnel nationwide, significantly enhancing efforts to combat drug trafficking and associated violence.

Any attempt to remove the HIDTA Program from ONDCP would undermine its effectiveness and disrupt the long-standing partnership between local, state, and federal law enforcement. The neutral oversight provided by ONDCP ensures that all levels of law enforcement have an equal voice in shaping and executing drug control strategies. If the HIDTA Program were moved out of ONDCP, it would eliminate this crucial balance, rendering the program less effective and less responsive to the needs of local communities.

We respectfully ask that you reject any cuts to the HIDTA budget and oppose moving the program to the Department of Justice, as such a move would severely hinder its ability to effectively facilitate the strong collaboration it is known for between all law enforcement partners.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We appreciate your support in ensuring that the HIDTA Program continues to support efforts in Maryland to address the ongoing drug crisis and to protect the health and safety of our communities.

Sincerely,



Sheriff James DeWees, Carroll County, Maryland  
President, Maryland Sheriffs' Association

