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The Honorable Ben Cline
Congressman
2443 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Congressman Cline:

I am writing on behalf of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police (VACP) 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 Virginia citizens, and we are urging you to restore the funding to the current \$298 million level and keep the program within ONDCP.

The VACP, comprised of more than 500 members including active and retired federal, state, local, and private law enforcement and criminal justice agency executives, administrators, and managers, fully supports the HIDTA program. As our nation continues to grapple with a devastating drug overdose crisis and associated violence, the HIDTA Program continues to be a key component of our national and regional drug control strategy, serving 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.

As you are aware, ONDCP manages the HIDTA Program, which works to disrupt the market for illegal drugs by dismantling or disrupting drug trafficking and money laundering organizations through coordinated law enforcement efforts.

The Washington/Baltimore HIDTA and the Appalachia HIDTA support 17 law enforcement initiatives in Virginia, which include participation by 22 Sheriffs' offices and 34 local police departments supporting 153 personnel from local/state law enforcement agencies. This includes Frederick, Warren, and Roanoke Counties, which are HIDTA designated counties.

Last year, these groups were responsible for disrupting and dismantling 49 violent drug trafficking organizations. They seized over 53 kilograms of fentanyl and over 700,000 dosage units, 2,223 kilograms of cocaine, and over 200 kilograms of methamphetamine for a value of over \$70 million. Additionally, they seized over \$5.4 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, reducing the effectiveness of our response to the drug threat in our 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 Virginia to address the ongoing drug crisis and to protect the health and safety of our communities.

Sincerely,



Dana G. Schrad
Executive Director