



# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

COURAGE HONOR INTEGRITY

July 18, 2025

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senate  
730 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Angela Alsobrooks  
United States Senate  
374 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris  
United States House of Representatives  
1536 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen, Senator Alsobrooks, and Congressman Harris:

On behalf of the Harford County Sheriff's Office, I am writing to express our concerns regarding the Administration's Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposal, which would reduce funding for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program by \$102 million. While we recognize the complexities of the federal budget process and appreciate the Administration's ongoing efforts to address national priorities, we are concerned that this reduction may impact the effectiveness of regional drug enforcement efforts and undermines long-standing partnerships that are vital to public safety.

We respectfully request consideration be given to maintaining HIDTA's current placement within the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), rather than transferring its oversight to the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs. Maintaining HIDTA within ONDCP ensures its strategic alignment with national drug control priorities and allows for continued coordination among federal, state, and local agencies.

The HIDTA Program plays a vital role in our fight against illicit drug trafficking and its devastating impact on communities. Preserving this program's structure is essential to the continued success of our joint enforcement efforts.

Since 2011, the Harford County Sheriff's Office has proudly served as the administrative agency for the Harford County Drug Task Force/Harford County Drug Initiative, a key component of the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA Initiative. This collaborative Task Force unites dedicated

410-838-6600



professionals from the Harford County Sheriff's Office, Harford County State's Attorney's Office, Maryland State Police, Aberdeen Police Department, Bel Air Police Department, Havre de Grace Police Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Together, these agencies form a coordinated and strategic alliance to combat drug trafficking and promote public safety across Harford County and the surrounding region.

The Washington/Baltimore HIDTA Program has been an indispensable resource to our Task Force, delivering essential funding, intelligence resources, and operational coordination with federal law enforcement partners. This support has been instrumental in advancing our mission to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations operating at all levels - street, mid-tier, and upper-echelon - as well as combating human trafficking networks that endanger the safety and well-being of our communities.

Under the stewardship of the ONDCP, the HIDTA Program fosters genuine collaboration among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. This framework ensures equitable representation across all levels of government in shaping and executing drug enforcement strategies that are responsive to the distinct challenges of our region. We are concerned that transferring HIDTA to the Department of Justice may inadvertently shift priorities away from this balanced, community-informed approach.

The HIDTA Program also oversees the Case Explorer Program - an indispensable resource for case and event deconfliction, as well as investigative case matching. Case Explorer plays a critical role in preventing multiple agencies from inadvertently pursuing the same suspects, thereby enhancing officer safety and streamlining interagency coordination. By strengthening the broader intelligence landscape across jurisdictional boundaries, it helps ensure more informed and effective operations.

While the Case Explorer Program is an indispensable resource, HIDTA also provides the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP) to provide near real-time suspected overdose data across jurisdictions to support public safety and public health efforts to mobilize an immediate response to a sudden increase, or spike, in overdose events. ODMAP links first responders and relevant record management systems to a mapping tool that tracks overdoses to stimulate real-time response and strategic analysis across jurisdictions.

We are concerned that transferring oversight away from the ONDCP could compromise the integrity of these safeguards. A shift in oversight could diminish the collaborative infrastructure and interagency trust that make programs like Case Explorer and ODMAP so effective.

Law enforcement leaders across the country have expressed similar concerns - not out of resistance to change, but out of a shared desire to preserve what has proven effective. Local input and community-based enforcement strategies have been critical to our success, and we hope those considerations remain central in any restructuring.

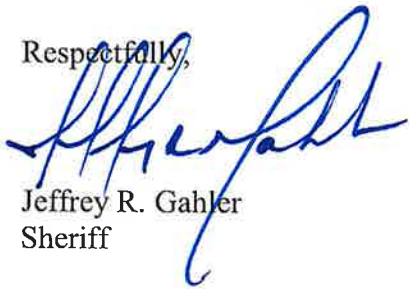
The ONDCP's neutral positioning is a key asset in ensuring the HIDTA Program remains collaborative and strategically effective. By remaining independent of any single agency's agenda, ONDCP ensures that HIDTA continues to serve the collective interests of law enforcement and public safety - a proven approach that delivers results where they are needed most.

I respectfully urge your consideration of the potential unintended impacts of these proposed changes. We ask that you and your colleagues in Congress work to ensure that HIDTA remains fully funded and retains its placement under ONDCP's oversight.

Preserving HIDTA's current structure is essential to our continued ability to dismantle violent drug trafficking networks, safeguard our communities, and save lives - not only in Harford County and the State of Maryland, but in communities across the Nation.

Thank you for your support of this vital public safety need.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Gahler", written over the word "Respectfully,".

Jeffrey R. Gahler  
Sheriff