



Prevention Awareness Team of Hidalgo County (PATH)

June 10, 2025

Re: Urgent Concerns Regarding FY 2026 Budget Changes to HIDTA and ONDCP Oversight

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for the South Texas HIDTA. The HIDTA Program has been a longstanding and vital partner to the Prevention Awareness Team of Hidalgo County (P.A.T.H.) and has played a critical role in promoting coordinated drug awareness and education efforts in our Hidalgo County communities. Ultimately, the goal of our combined Demand Reduction efforts is to help reduce crime and ensure safe neighborhoods in Hidalgo County communities.

Since 2018, the support from the South Texas HIDTA Prevention Initiative has enabled P.A.T.H. to increase community awareness through culturally and developmentally appropriate outreach and educational activities at area schools, after-school programs, faith-based youth groups, family engagement events, and others. Our collaborative efforts align with HIDTA's demand reduction priorities and long-term strategies to interrupt the youth-to-substance-use pipeline through prevention, education, and early intervention.

I am very concerned about the proposed FY2026 budget changes, which include a 35% reduction in funding and a transfer of HIDTA oversight from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to the Department of Justice (DOJ). These changes threaten to undermine HIDTA's proven governance structure, reduce operational flexibility, and hinder ongoing Demand Reduction Projects. The current ONDCP framework allows local agencies to tailor responses to the needs of a particular community. The transfer of oversight from ONDCP to the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) more centralized DOJ model will severely impact the abilities of South Texas HIDTA, and indeed all HIDTAs, to serve their communities in a meaningful manner.

We respectfully urge decision-makers to reconsider these proposed changes. HIDTA's strength lies in its ability to unify agencies across all levels of government under a neutral and collaborative model. Preserving both its structure and funding is essential to ensuring public safety throughout Texas and surrounding regions.

Respectfully,

Juan Sifuentes
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