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August 12, 2026

Senator Mark Kelly
Hart Senate Building SH516
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Letter of Support for Continued and Stable Baseline Funding for the Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (AZ HIDTA)

Dear Senator Kelly,

On behalf of the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council (APAAC)—representing the Arizona Attorney General, the 15 County Attorneys, and Municipal Prosecutors across our state—I am writing to express our strong, unwavering support for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program. We urge federal decision-makers to maintain full baseline funding for the Arizona HIDTA under the administrative coordination of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

The HIDTA model is uniquely effective because of its balanced regional leadership. Controlled by an Executive Board with equal representation from federal and state/local law enforcement leaders, HIDTA ensures all decisions are made collaboratively and tailored specifically to Arizona's drug threats. Under ONDCP's coordination, each task force brings federal, state, and local personnel to the same table. In Arizona, 93% of HIDTA funding directly supports state and local law enforcement. The program unites 804 full-time and 38 part-time participants across 92 law enforcement agencies, operating 24 enforcement task forces across 10 designated HIDTA counties (with Coconino County seeking designation).

From the prosecutorial perspective, HIDTA's support is vital to keeping our court systems and public safety infrastructure operational:

- **Prosecutorial and Investigative Support:** Arizona HIDTA directly reimburses salaries for 52 critical law enforcement agency positions. Twelve of these are specialized prosecutor positions across the Arizona Attorney General's Office (4), Cochise County (2), Maricopa County (1), Pima County (1), Santa Cruz County (2), and Yuma County (2).
- **Intelligence and Interdiction Infrastructure:** The Investigative Support Center—operating out of Phoenix and Tucson—provides indispensable intelligence, deconfliction, wiretap assistance, and device exploitation.

**“EMPOWERING PROSECUTORS THROUGH TRAINING AND ADVOCACY TO SERVE AS MINISTERS OF JUSTICE,
AS WE STRIVE TO BUILD CRIMINAL JUSTICE BRIDGES WITH THE GREATER COMMUNITY.”**

Furthermore, HIDTA reimburses essential facility costs, such as multi-task force hubs in Phoenix (housing 7 task forces and 289 personnel) and Marana (housing 3 task forces and 105 personnel), as well as the Chandler training facility.

- **Federal Collaboration:** HIDTA task forces complement the newly formed Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs). Continuous deconfliction ensures state, local, and federal agencies work in unison rather than in silos.

The impact of this program cannot be overstated. In 2025, HIDTAs nationwide removed \$21.6 billion worth of illicit drugs from our communities, dismantled or disrupted 3,383 drug trafficking and money laundering organizations, and yielded a return on investment of \$82.78 per dollar spent. In Arizona alone, task forces investigated 74 drug trafficking organizations and 11 money laundering organizations—most tied directly to Mexican sources of supply.

Recent budgetary uncertainties highlight why stable funding under ONDCP is imperative. Proposals to shift the HIDTA program to the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance with a 35% funding cut, alongside recent administrative delays in apportioning approved funds, place local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies in severe jeopardy. Unstable funding threatens to force furloughs, halt major drug trafficking investigations, and leave local agencies carrying unreimbursed operational costs.

The Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council stands firmly alongside Arizona HIDTA. We strongly urge Congress and federal leadership to preserve HIDTA's current organizational structure under ONDCP and ensure prompt, full baseline funding to protect our communities.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Burton Ortiz

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Executive Director

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