

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 16, 2019

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Coons
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Coons,

We appreciate your past support on law enforcement issues and strongly urge you to fund the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program at the highest possible level in fiscal year (FY) 2020, at a level that is at least commensurate with FY 2019. In FY2019, the HIDTA program was funded at \$280 million. In addition, consistent with Congressional intent outlined in the SUPPORT Act (P.L. 115-27), we request that the HIDTA program remain at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

The HIDTA program has been crucial for state and local law enforcement in combating drug abuse in our nation's communities. Now more than ever, maintaining resources for the HIDTA program is critical, as there are 9 new HIDTA counties across 5 states, and the Overdose Response Strategy has expanded to 24 states.

The HIDTA program coordinates federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in designated areas, enabling them to effectively disrupt or dismantle drug trafficking organizations and reduce drug related crime. One of the hallmarks of the HIDTA program is its flexibility in that each HIDTA can quickly redirect resources to address emerging threats that are unique to their region. It also engages and provides support to state and federal prosecutors to successfully convict the individuals associated with drug trafficking organizations.

According to the HIDTA 2018 Program Summary of Effectiveness, HIDTAs:

- Investigated more than 7,900 drug trafficking and money laundering organizations;
- Deconflicted 244,000 tactical operations among 3,562 law enforcement agencies providing for enhanced officer safety;
- Made 93,977 arrests, seized 21,034 firearms, and apprehended 43,775 fugitives; and
- Facilitated training for over 75,000 criminal justice professionals on drug-related subjects.

In addition to providing essential resources to law enforcement, HIDTA has continued its effectiveness in disrupting illegal drug markets by taking proceeds of illegal drug activity off the

streets. In the past year, HIDTA seized \$16.4 billion in illicit drugs in a continuing effort to safeguard our communities. Additionally, in 2018, HIDTAs seized \$521.3 million in cash, a total twice the amount of Federal funds appropriated for the Program, and other assets valued at \$181 million. The combined value of the illegal drugs seized and the cash and assets taken from traffickers equates to a return on investment of \$64.02 for every HIDTA dollar budgeted in 2018.

While we were encouraged by the funding for HIDTA in FY2019, we are concerned about returning to the lower funding in years prior and have been dismayed to see the most recent presidential budget requests for HIDTA that call for removing the program from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The HIDTA program's effectiveness on the ground is due largely to ONDCP's commitment to its goals. Nine counties have recently been added to the HIDTA program, and more than 67 percent of the country's population lives in a HIDTA area; therefore, reducing the program's budget – or eliminating the program altogether – would severely hamper law enforcement efforts to address drug trafficking and other illicit drug challenges amidst a nationwide opioid epidemic.

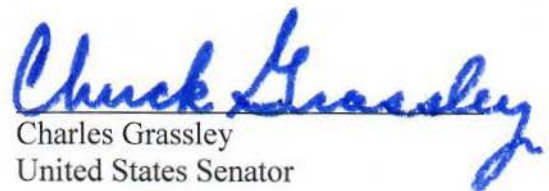
HIDTA – under the leadership of ONDCP – has proven itself to be a fundamental component of this nation's efforts to combat drug trafficking and abuse. Adequate funding is essential to continue and build upon the HIDTA program's critical mission and to allow it to add additional counties and advance innovative approaches aimed at addressing our nation's principal drug threats.

Again, we thank you for your support of this important program and request the highest possible funding for the HIDTA program in FY 2020. For any questions or concerns, please contact Rachel Wright for Senator Grassley's office at Rachel.Wright@judiciary-rep.senate.gov or Joe Verran for Senator Feinstein's office at Joe.Verran@Feinstein.senate.gov.

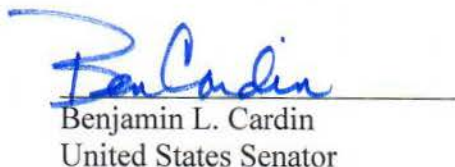
Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Charles Grassley
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



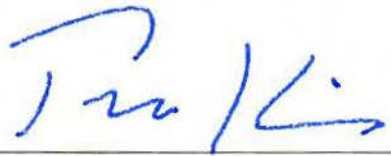
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



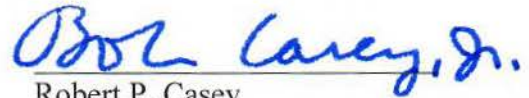
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



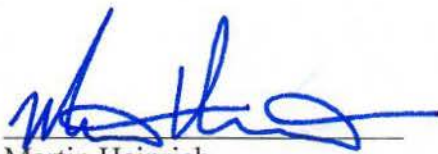
Jon Tester
United States Senator



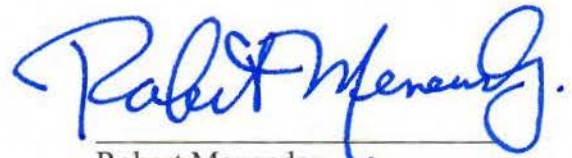
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



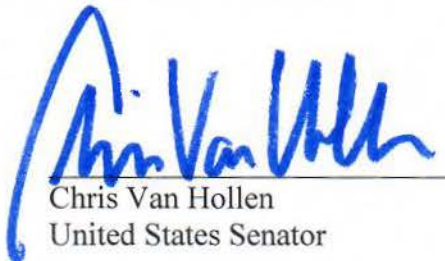
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



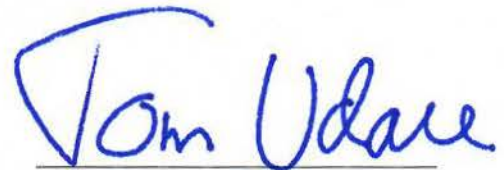
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



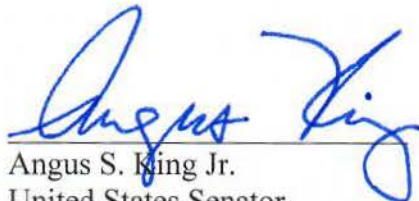
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator




Tom Udall
United States Senator



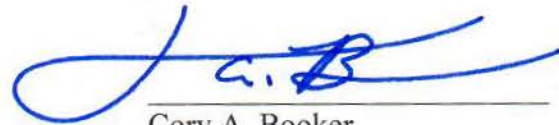
Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



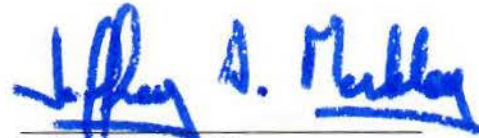
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



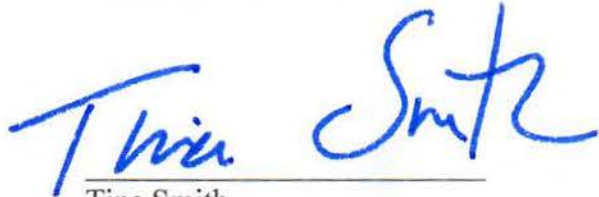
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



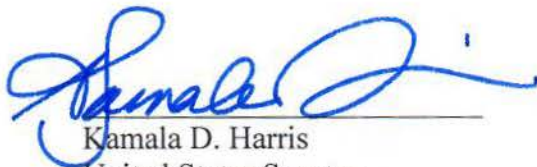
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



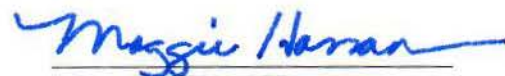
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



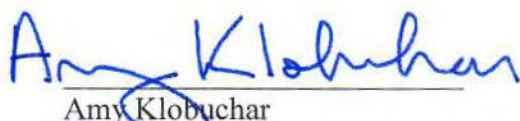
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



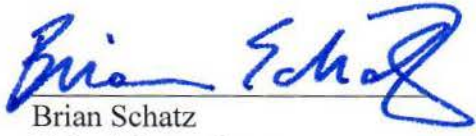
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



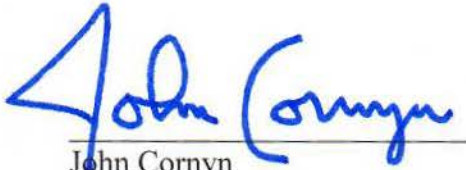
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



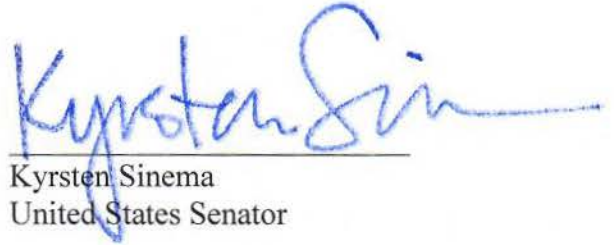
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator