

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.  
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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 2, 2023

Dr. Rahul Gupta  
Director  
Office of National Drug Control Policy  
1800 G Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Director Gupta,

I write in support of the application submitted by the Liberty Mid-Atlantic High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (LMA HIDTA) to expand the LMA HIDTA to include Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. I understand the application received a favorable review, and I appreciate your time and consideration.

The opioid epidemic is one of the biggest challenges in Pennsylvania, and it continues to claim the lives of thousands of Pennsylvanians each year. In 2020, Pennsylvania had the eighth highest drug overdose death rate in the nation at 42.4 deaths per 100,000 people. Lehigh County, which has consistently experienced increasing levels of overdose deaths, is no exception to this trend. In 2019, the rate of drug overdose deaths in the County was 43.6 per 100,000 people. In 2021, that rate was 52.4. These numbers are well above the national average.

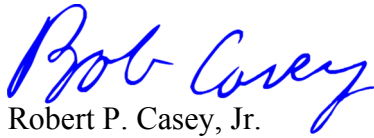
Both fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses in Lehigh County have not only damaged the Lehigh community, but have also strained the federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies responsible for responding to this crisis. While these agencies have worked hard to prioritize their fight against drug trafficking, the opioid epidemic, and the violence that often accompanies the illicit drug trade, our officers on the front lines need assistance.

In fact, Lehigh County, which is located between Philadelphia and New York City, has become a drug trafficking hotspot. Local officials have assessed that this trend is likely to continue, in part due to an increase in gang activity from New York City and northern New Jersey. The County has also reported an influx in counterfeit narcotics from Philadelphia, which is likely to persist since the street value of these narcotics is five to ten times higher in Lehigh County than it is in the source market.

It is my hope that a funding consideration will follow the designation. LMA HIDTA would utilize the additional resources to build upon and expand crucial existing programs for the residents of Lehigh County.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration. Please include this letter in the official record of the application. Consistent with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, I also respectfully request that you keep me informed of the status of this grant application. Finally, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my staff at (202) 224-6851.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator