

United States Senate

May 10, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C., 20500

Mr. President:

I write today regarding reports that your Administration is proposing a devastating cut to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). These reports and subsequent comments by Administration officials are deeply troubling and would represent a significant step backwards on fighting the growing drug crisis. I write today to respectfully urge your reconsideration of these devastating funding cuts and instead work with Democrats and Republicans to empower those law enforcement officers serving on the front lines in Montana and across our nation.

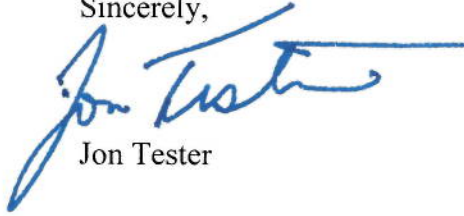
The Office, first authorized by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, plays a critical role in our nation's drug-control efforts by combining public health and public safety approaches to reduce drug use and its consequences. The Office awards federal grants directly to community coalitions nationwide through the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program, which your Administration is proposing to eliminate. There are 28 regional HIDTAs nationwide, which include approximately 16 percent of all counties in the United States and 60 percent of the U.S. population. Montana currently has five HIDTA Counties: Cascade, Flathead, Lewis and Clark, Missoula, and Yellowstone. These collaborative initiatives bring together resources of federal, state, local, and tribal agencies in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the state. Through the work of the Rocky Mountain HIDTA, nearly \$1 million in grants are directed to task forces operating in Montana. These HIDTA grants allow law enforcement entities to coordinate with other states and regions in order to target and dismantle large, multi-state and even international drug trafficking organizations. Without these resources, local law enforcement agencies will lose a powerful ally in their fight against these growing drug epidemics.

The successes of local law enforcement in Montana are the biggest indicators of the necessity of these HIDTA funds. In 2016, Montana's HIDTA regional task forces made 953 arrests, seized 299 weapons, 150 pounds of cocaine, and 80 pounds of methamphetamine.

I have seen firsthand the widespread effect that opioid addiction and meth abuse continue to have on families in my state. Without continued support for HIDTA initiatives, Montana's public health and law enforcement agencies stand to lose their most effective tool in the fight against the proliferation of drug addictions and drug-related crimes. Simply put, this proposal would be a significant step backwards in our fight against drug abuse and the devastation it has had on communities across rural states like Montana.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and stand ready to work with you to address these growing concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester