

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2017

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
BUDGET
ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES
INTELLIGENCE
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to express my support for the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and concern regarding recent reports of the Administration's proposal to cut the office's funding by 95 percent. With our country in the midst of a devastating opioid epidemic, this approach is misguided and will only hurt our communities struggling with this scourge. I hope that as you finalize your FY'18 Budget, you will consider the importance of ONDCP and provide adequate funding for the office to carry out its work, including the Drug Free Communities (DFC) Support Program and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program.

The severity of the opioid epidemic further underscores ONDCP's importance. In 2015, the most recent national data available, over 33,000 people died from opioid overdoses. This accounts for roughly two-thirds of all drug-related deaths. In addition, overdoses from fentanyl and other synthetic opioids rose 72 percent from 2014 to 2015. In Maine last year, 376 people died of a drug overdose, an increase of nearly 40 percent. Therefore, we must do all we can to invest in communities grappling with this crisis.

Specifically, the efforts of Drug Free Communities Support Programs must continue to be supported. Last year, ONDCP, in partnership with SAMHSA, provided nearly \$86 million in grants for the 698 DFC programs located across the country. This includes the \$2.25 million that went to 18 DFC programs in Maine last year. These local community coalitions play an integral role in preventing youth substance abuse.

Moreover, the Drug Free Communities program supports evidence-based efforts that work. In fact, DFC's 2014 National Evaluation Report revealed a significant decrease in past-30-day use of prescription drugs for youth in communities with a DFC coalition. Drastically reducing ONDCP's capacity to administer these programs would hinder the ability of communities in Maine and across the country to tackle their substance abuse challenges.

In addition, ONDCP's leadership on enforcement through the HIDTA program, which includes 28 regional HIDTAs in 48 states, must continue to play a leading role in our response. Each regional HIDTA program assists and coordinates efforts with law enforcement agencies at the federal, state and local level to reduce drug trafficking and production.

For example, the efforts of the New England HIDTA in Cumberland County are vital in combatting these problems. As Robert Moulton, the Scarborough Chief of Police noted, "I see

the work that HIDTA does through its task forces made up of Federal, State and local partners and I can say that this problem would be even larger without the work that they perform." As we seek to mitigate this potent and growing threat, a strong HIDTA program should remain a top priority.

The Drug Free Communities and HIDTA programs provide support to children and their families, and keep communities safe. As Congress and the Administration work to address the opioid epidemic, it is imperative that we continue invest in this type of local engagement and leadership. Therefore, as your FY'18 Budget takes shape, I urge you to provide full funding for ONDCP and its critical initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Angus King", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator