

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 20, 2016

Michael Botticelli  
Director, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy  
750 17<sup>th</sup> NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Botticelli,

We write today to express our support for the efforts by a coalition of law enforcement agencies to designate Monongalia County in West Virginia as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) County. By designating this county as a HIDTA county, additional funding will be allocated and local communities will be better equipped to battle the pharmaceutical and illegal drug trafficking epidemic in West Virginia.

The HIDTA program provides assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in areas identified as critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States. In other areas of West Virginia, we have seen firsthand how the HIDTA program has made a tremendous difference. That is why, in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, this delegation has been steadfast and vocal supporters of robust funding for this program.

Monongalia County has a unique set of circumstances that would make additional funding for the local drug task force especially useful and the following criteria make this area of the state particularly deserving of a HIDTA designation:

1. West Virginia has the highest drug overdose death rate in the country, with 34 per 100,000 people suffering drug overdose fatalities. Monongalia County has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest drug overdose death rate in West Virginia – outdone only by Berkeley and Cabell counties, which have both been designated as HIDTA counties by the Office of National Drug Control Policy.
2. Monongalia County is home to West Virginia University and Morgantown, one of West Virginia's major population centers. The presence of a large university results in thousands of students from other parts of the country coming to the region, along with additional drug activity. The addition of HIDTA resources will ensure that the county has all the resources necessary to deal with the issues that come with having a large university.
3. Monongalia County faces threats from drug trafficking organizations that have ties to large metropolitan areas such as Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Columbus, and Chicago.
4. North Central West Virginia, which includes Monongalia County, is a significant source of heroin, cocaine and pharmaceutical drug trafficking.
5. The perceived lack of law enforcement pressure in West Virginia has made Monongalia County an attractive area in which to operate as opposed to larger cities with more law enforcement resources.
6. The law enforcement agencies in Monongalia County are committed to addressing the significant drug trafficking problems in the region and the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of West Virginia has agreed to increase its response if the proposed county is granted a HIDTA designation.

The Mon Metro Drug & Violent Crimes Task Force, consisting of entities such as the Monongalia County Sheriff's Office, Morgantown Police Department, West Virginia State Police, DEA, ATF, FBI and United States Attorney's Office, has committed resources to the drug trafficking problem and possesses the determination to respond aggressively to this urgent crisis. Additionally, West Virginia University has also committed the college's Police Department and its considerable resources and programs to this Task Force. The additional funding that a HIDTA designation would bring to the region would provide a tremendous boost to the Task Force's tireless efforts and benefit communities and citizens not only in West Virginia, but also in neighboring states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

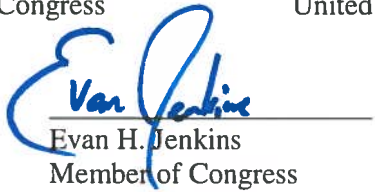
Thank you for your tireless support of our state's efforts to fight back against this drug epidemic. The attention and federal resources that you and your staff have provided to our state does not go unnoticed and is much appreciated. The West Virginia Congressional Delegation supports and encourages the designation of Monongalia County as a HIDTA county and asks that you strongly consider granting it this status. Should you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact Octavian Jordan in Congressman David McKinley's office (202-225-4172 or [octavian.jordan@mail.house.gov](mailto:octavian.jordan@mail.house.gov)) or Victoria Flood in Senator Shelley Moore Capito's office (202-224-6472 or [victoria\\_flood@capito.senate.gov](mailto:victoria_flood@capito.senate.gov)).

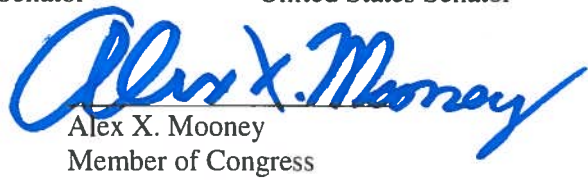
Sincerely,

  
David B. McKinley, P.E.  
Member of Congress

  
Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator

  
Joe Manchin, III  
United States Senator

  
Evan H. Jenkins  
Member of Congress

  
Alex X. Mooney  
Member of Congress