

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

July 17, 2012

The Honorable Gil Kerlikowske  
The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy  
750 Seventeenth Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Kerlikowske,

I am writing to you today about the critical importance of resources to eradicate drug abuse and trafficking in my home state of West Virginia. Specifically, I would like to call your attention to the petition that has been submitted for the designation of four West Virginia counties as High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) counties and share my fervent support for additional investments by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and its partners in combating the deluge of pharmaceutical, heroin, and cocaine drug trafficking in the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia.

The northern West Virginia petition is the result of a multi-year effort by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies – led by the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of West Virginia – to effectively address drug trafficking across the Ohio and Pennsylvania borders into West Virginia. As the northern West Virginia petition indicates, the proximity of West Virginia's Northern Panhandle counties to major transportation routes, including Interstate 70, leaves the area exposed to a near-constant threat of drug movement and distribution, draining the already limited resources of law enforcement partners within the region. I very much want to see our law enforcement have the greatest number of resources possible to reverse devastating drug crime trends in my state.

I fully recognize that ONDCP considers a number of HIDTA petitions each year for what are also areas worthy of consideration. I do, however, want to impress upon you the magnitude of the drug trafficking problem in West Virginia and the significance of adding resources to the Northern Panhandle, which currently lacks HIDTA-designated counties.

We could not even begin to take on this fight without the efforts of our local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and the Appalachia HIDTA program, which have made significant contributions already in eradicating harmful substances, including heroin, cocaine, pharmaceutical drugs, and marijuana. It is important that we continue these efforts and expand the Appalachia HIDTA to include northern West Virginia to stem the flow of illegal drugs into my home state.

West Virginia, as you know from your visit last year, has the nation's second highest rate of drug overdose deaths and is one of the leading states for total prescription painkillers sold per annum. This destructive epidemic is literally tearing apart families and communities across my state. These statistics show the need for additional resources in my state, including law enforcement funding through HIDTA, as well as resources from other programs that can be used

for prevention and treatment to help individuals rebuild their lives and reduce the demand for illegally-obtained prescription drugs and narcotics.

Director Kerlikowske, thank you for your leadership and commitment to eradicating drug abuse and diversion in West Virginia and across the country. I welcome the opportunity to speak with you about this issue further.

Sincerely,



John D. Rockefeller IV