

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 28, 2019

Mr. James Carroll
Director
Office of National Drug Control Policy
750 Seventeenth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Carroll:

We 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 Bucks County, Pennsylvania. If approved, this designation will allow the LMA HIDTA to better coordinate its law enforcement efforts, identify and dismantle large-scale criminal organizations, and improve the safety and security of Bucks County and Pennsylvania's residents.

Over the last several years, Pennsylvania has become an epicenter of the opioid epidemic, which has created serious public health challenges and has strained law enforcement resources. In 2017, Pennsylvania lost 5,456 people to drug overdoses at a rate of 43 deaths per 100,000 people, which was almost twice the national average. Like many communities across Pennsylvania, Bucks County has experienced high levels of drug overdose deaths. Overdose deaths have increased substantially – from a rate of 17 deaths per 100,000 in 2015 to a rate of 37 deaths per 100,000 in 2017. The county also reports that fentanyl was identified in more than 80% of overdose victims in 2017.

Perhaps no one is more acutely aware of the challenges in combatting this epidemic than our federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, who have been on the front lines of investigations, seizures, and prosecutions in drug cases time and again. Law enforcement agencies in Bucks County have made combatting the opioid epidemic and drug trafficking a top priority, but they need assistance. The high number of fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses in the county coupled with related violence have placed a heavy burden on Bucks County's law enforcement agencies.

Expanding the LMA HIDTA to encompass Bucks County is strategically expedient given its location next to Philadelphia, which the Drug Enforcement Agency has repeatedly identified as being one of the country's major sites for significant seizures of fentanyl. Philadelphia is a source city for large-scale narcotics flowing into Bucks County. In addition, the county reports that recent law enforcement investigations have shown that Bucks County is a site for significant drug distribution operations. The county reports that drug traffickers also use Bucks County as a key transshipment point in the Mid-Atlantic region.

The addition of Bucks County to the LMA HIDTA will enable the LMA HIDTA to better assess the trafficking and use of illicit drugs throughout the county, state, and region, and more effectively coordinate intelligence sharing among the LMA HIDTA counties. This designation will also enhance Bucks County's ability to target drug trafficking organizations and improve the quality of life for the county's residents and visitors.

It is our understanding that the application to expand the LMA HIDTA to include Bucks County, has widespread support from law enforcement leaders in southeastern Pennsylvania, including the Bucks County District Attorney's Office, the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and multiple federal law enforcement agencies. Their support for this application highlights the severity of the drug problem in Bucks County, as well as the need to expand the LMA HIDTA to effectively address the problem.

We strongly urge you to give full and fair consideration to LMA HIDTA's request to expand to Bucks County. Please keep our respective offices informed of your decision.

Sincerely,



Pat Toomey
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Brian K. Fitzpatrick
United States Representative

CC: Leopold J. Luberecki, Director of Legislative Affairs
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Jeremiah A. Daley, Executive Director
Liberty Mid-Atlantic High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area