21 February 2018

Kellyanne Conway
Counselor to the President
The White House

Re: An Open Letter Regarding ONDCP Funding and Programs

Dear Ms. Conway,

Our organization, the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative (PAARI), is comprised of more than 375 police chiefs in 32 states who provide pre-arrest access to treatment for people with substance use disorders and we strongly support ONDCP.

Just 90 days ago, two chiefs of police from our organization were invited to the White House to stand on stage with President Trump as he publicly declared that the opioid epidemic was a top priority for this administration. Members of law enforcement were hopeful that this would be not only a symbolic recognition but a mobilization at the highest levels of the government to deploy the resources required to save lives.

For the second time in a year, the President proposed cutting ONDCP funding and life-saving initiatives by 95 percent. We seek to urgently call attention to this misguided and dangerous proposal, and encourage the President to increase ONDCP funding rather than eliminate it.

We are losing 174 Americans every day to opioid overdose deaths and ONDCP is a key agency in the national effort to counter this epidemic, especially at a time when synthetic opioids are significantly increase the risks. It is more important than ever for ONDCP to continue its effective and vital community-based programs that support law enforcement, reduce crime, and save lives.

Police officers from cities, towns and rural counties are literally on the front lines of this epidemic. We have the unique duty of aiding the victims in the search for quality treatment and recovery while pursuing the dealers and traffickers who profit from misery and death. No other group of professionals bears this responsibility, and perhaps no organization is as supportive of our efforts as the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) programs.

The President’s proposal calls for shifting nearly all of ONDCP’s budget ($340 million) to the Department of Justice. This move would in essence strip ONDCP of its mission, while burying programs like HIDTA, thereby limiting the policy influence and access that police chiefs critically need now more than ever.

ONDCP is a champion of local-level law enforcement efforts to stop the flow of drugs into our communities, while improving access to treatment and recovery for those caught in the grip of the epidemic. This is made possible by the presence of municipal law enforcement veterans in leadership roles with HIDTA. It is also due to a partnership and a strong sense of collaboration between ONDCP leadership and municipal law enforcement leaders that spans decades. Shifting virtually all of the budget to the Department of Justice would redirect those resources to multiple federal agencies, which strips those of us on the front lines of vital intelligence, access and resources. We have a responsibility to the people who live in our communities, and a strategic partner like ONDCP has allowed police departments to save numerous lives.

For example, the intelligence efforts of HIDTA, in partnership with municipal law enforcement, sounded the alarm on fentanyl and carfentanly more than one year before each substance arrived in our local communities. PAARI has distributed 10,000 doses of life-saving nasal naloxone to first responders and families in need, which has prevented the loss of countless more lives to this epidemic. Rather than eliminate ONDCP, the administration should expand ONDCP programs like
widespread deployment of naloxone and increased intelligence sharing among municipal agencies, through ONDCP and HIDTA.

ONDCP was also an early champion and remains a vital partner of PAARI, which has proven that law enforcement led community-based pre-arrest intervention and recovery programs can drastically reduce crime, prevent the loss of life, and save law enforcement costs. A 95 percent reduction in the budget of ONDCP would make our work much more difficult and would result in unnecessary barriers, inefficiencies and increased loss of life.

The opioid epidemic is the most urgent law enforcement, quality of life and public health issue of our day. Law enforcement leaders from PAARI proudly stood with President Trump last October when he called the opioid epidemic a public health emergency. It is our sincere hope that ONDCP, one of the most effective federal programs that reaches the municipal level, will not be curtailed, as doing so would set our nation back in this effort and surely result in even more otherwise preventable overdose deaths.

We sincerely hope the administration will stand with law enforcement and honor its pledge to fight the opioid epidemic by fully funding and supporting ONDCP’s leadership and critical programs.

Sincerely,

Members of the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative

Chief Frederick Ryan, Arlington Police Department, Chair, Police Council, PAARI
Gil Kerlikowske, former Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy, PAARI Board Member
John E. Rosenthal, Co-Founder and Chair, Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative
Allie Hunter McDade, Executive Director, Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative
Robert P. Peryam, President, National HIDTA Directors Association

Carmen Best, Chief of Police; Seattle Police Department; Seattle, Washington
Brannon Prevett, Special Agent; Homeland Security Investigations; Corpus Christi, Texas
Andy J. Watson, District Attorney of Potter County, Pennsylvania

Stephen G McAllister, Police Commissioner; Floral Park Police Department; Floral Park, New York
David Rausch, Chief of Police; Knoxville Police Department, Knoxville, Tennessee

Kriste Etue, Colonel; Michigan State Police; Lansing, Michigan
Michael Sauschuck, Chief of Police; Portland Police Department; Portland, Maine

Ernest Martineau, Chief of Police; Fitchburg Police Department; Fitchburg, Massachusetts
Baron Brown, Sergeant Community Engagement; Ferndale Police Department; Ferndale, Michigan

Marvin Mailey, Jr., Chief of Police; Dover Police Department; Dover, Delaware

Patricia Cummings, Police Officer; Worcester Police Department; Worcester, Massachusetts
Jonathan Ventura, Chief of Police; Arlington Police Department; Arlington, Washington

Brandon Frank, Patrolman; Newton Falls Police Department; Newton Falls, Ohio
Chris DeGlopper, Sergeant; Greenfield Police Department; Greenfield, Wisconsin

David Conklin, Chief of Police; Monroe Police Department; Monroe, New York

Charles Bane, Detective; Arlington County Police Department; Arlington, Virginia
Marc Montminy, Chief of Police; Manchester Police Department; Manchester, Connecticut

Michelle Harter, Coordinator; Burrillville Police Department; Burrillville, Rhode Island
Ron Wiles, Chief of Police; Grand Blanc Township Police Department; Flint, Michigan

Jennifer Paster, Lieutenant; Brookline Police Department; Brookline, Massachusetts

Richard Stillman, Chief of Police; Bridgton Police Department; Bridgton, Maine
Dan Templeman, Chief of Police; Everett Police Department; Everett, Washington

Michael Eshner, Outreach Officer; Holbrook Police Department; Holbrook, Massachusetts
Peter Volkman, Chief of Police; Chatham Police Department; Chatham, New York

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Scott C. Allen, Chief of Police; E. Bridgewater Police Department; E. Bridgewater, Massachusetts

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Daniel Unsworth, Police Lieutenant; Watertown Police Department; Watertown, Massachusetts
Daniel Jones, Chief of Police; Gorham Police Department; Gorham, Maine
Michael Prouty, Detective; Scituate Police Department; Scituate, Massachusetts
Kevin Copping, Sheriff, Essex County Sheriff’s Department; Middleton, Massachusetts
Edward Conley, Chief of Police; Manchester-by-the-Sea Police Department; Massachusetts
Michael A. Mageary, Chief of Police; Lynn Police Department; Lynn, Massachusetts
Robert J. DeVries, Chief of Police; Kingman Police Department; Kingman, Arizona
Lauren Tirone, Sergeant; Amesbury Police Department; Amesbury, Massachusetts
Tori Cyrus, Social Welfare Officer; Everett Fire Department; Everett, Massachusetts
Kenneth Hatmaker, Chief of Police; Jeffersonsontown Police Department; Jeffersonsontown, Kentucky
Robert McEvoy, Sergeant; Bridgewater State University Police Department, Massachusetts
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Joe Framke, Detective Sergeant; Oshkosh Police Department; Oshkosh, Wisconsin
Brad Shirley, Chief of Police; Boiling Spring Lakes Police Department; Southport, North Carolina
Eliezer Rivera, Sheriff; Cheshire County Sheriff’s Office; Keene, New Hampshire
Mark Holden, Chief of Police; Willard Police Department; Willard, Ohio
Max Triola, Intelligence Analyst; Houston Police Department; Houston, Texas
John McCarthy, Chief Gloucester; Police Gloucester Department; Gloucester, Massachusetts
Michael Ward, Chief of Police; Alexandria Police Department; Alexandria, Kentucky
Tim Lentz, Chief of Police; Covington Police Department; Covington, Louisiana
Kendrick Rose, Lieutenant; Lehi City Police Department; Lehi, Utah
Scott Baker, Interim Chief of Police; Annapolis Police Department; Annapolis, Maryland
Douglas F. Wyman, Jr. Chief of Police; Sandwich Police Department; Sandwich, New Hampshire
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George Filenko, Chief of Police; Round Lake Park Police Department; Round Lake Park, Illinois
Thomas Bashore, Chief of Police; Nashville Police Department; Nashville, North Carolina
Heather Bauer, Patrolman; Norton Police Department; Norton, Ohio
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Mark Chambers, Operations Captain; Westford Police Department; Westford, Massachusetts
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Michael Richards, Chief of Police; Newton Police Department; Newton, New Jersey
Steven Vaccaro, Chief of Police; Mokena Police Department; Mokena, Illinois
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CC: The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
The Honorable Michael Pence  
The Honorable Jefferson B. Sessions III  
The Honorable Tom Price