

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 22, 2022

Rahul Gupta
Director
Office of National Drug Control Policy
1800 G St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Director Gupta,

Thank you for your leadership overseeing the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and for the agency's previous partnership with my office to bolster our Central Valley California (CVC) High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). I write today to advocate for two measures that I believe will assist our region in the fight against illicit drugs. First, I urge ONDCP to provide additional funding for the CVC HIDTA to address the growing threat of fentanyl and second, I urge the agency to designate methamphetamine as an emerging national threat and to create a national plan to fight methamphetamine trafficking and related deaths.

According to the 2021 CVC HIDTA Threat Assessment, fentanyl is close to surpassing methamphetamine as the most dangerous drug threat. Fentanyl is driving the increase in overdose deaths in California and is involved in thirty-seven percent of all drug-related overdose deaths in the state with synthetic opioid-related overdose fatalities more broadly increasing by 541 percent since 2017. Additionally, per the National Security Section, over the last three years California law enforcement officers seized 225 percent more fentanyl in 2020 than in 2018. To combat this growing concern with fentanyl in the Central Valley, law enforcement and the CVC HIDTA needs additional funding and equipment to grow their efforts. That is why an increase in the funding available to the CVC HIDTA would be consistent with our demonstrated needs and would bring the region closer to addressing the growing levels of fentanyl in the Central Valley.

Beyond fentanyl, the Central Valley is continuing to face the threat of methamphetamine access and overdoses. Methamphetamine remains the CVC HIDTA's primary drug threat according to the 2021 CVC HIDTA Threat Assessment. Over the last three years, CVC HIDTA enforcement initiatives have seized an increasing amount of methamphetamine in the Central Valley—from 1,182 kilograms in 2018 to 2,061 kilograms in 2020. With the serious repercussions this drug poses to American communities, it is important that ONDCP responds accordingly by designating methamphetamine as an emerging drug threat and implementing a response plan. This effort has Congressional support and would be a helpful step in mitigating and responding to the incredibly high methamphetamine-related overdose deaths the country has experienced.

Given the immense work and coordination needed for the CVC HIDTA to address both the high levels of fentanyl and methamphetamine, it is critical that the region receives significant funding to bring it on equal footing with other HIDTA regions and that methamphetamines are properly recognized as an emerging national threat and addressed as such. I look forward to your timely attention to these critical matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the word "Harder".

Josh Harder

Member of Congress