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**Commander Ellen M. Arcieri
New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force
*Testimony***

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the sub-committee,

INTRODUCTION

My name is Ellen Arcieri and I presently hold the position of Commander of the New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force. The New Hampshire Drug Task Force was created in 1986 under the Attorney General's Office as a statewide multi-jurisdictional effort to combat the increasing effects illicit drugs were having on the State of New Hampshire and to investigate violations of the NH controlled drug act. The NH AG's Drug Task Force is made up of investigators from the Attorney General's Office and police officers from local, county and state police departments. These departments will lend police officers to the Drug Task Force for a period of several years in an effort to combat the drug crisis occurring in their communities. In exchange, these departments receive funding from the Edward Byrne Judicial Assistance Grant (JAG) Grant to assist in backfilling the department's positions left vacant. Presently, the NH AG's Drug Task Force has four regional teams servicing the central, western, and northern sections of New Hampshire. These teams comprise thirteen Drug Task Force officers from other police departments and three NH AG investigators to include the Commander, Deputy Commander, and a NH AG criminal investigator.

GOALS OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DRUG TASK FORCE

To meet the demands and mission of the NH Attorney General's Drug Task Force, the following goals were created;

- Combat the proliferation of illegal narcotics by concentrating enforcement in a multi-agency/multi-jurisdictional task force that focuses on the distribution and sale of street level illegal narcotics.

- Increase collaboration with New Hampshire State Police, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and other local, state, and Federal partners to maximize resources.
- Focus on communities in need of a drug enforcement presence.
 - Top priority are the towns and communities with no investigative presence due to a critical shortage of personnel and resources.
 - Top priority to the towns and communities that have dedicated personnel to the drug task force.
 - Investigations that have potential to develop into long term, large scale drug investigations involving other state jurisdictions, the DTF will work collaboratively with agencies tasked with working such investigations. These agencies include but are not limited to;
 - New Hampshire State Police
 - DEA HIDTA
 - FBI, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), etc.

COUNTER-NARCOTICS FEDERAL AND STATE COORDINATION

As previously mentioned, one of the goals of the NH AG's Drug Task Force is working collaboratively with numerous agencies. The most recent example of this cooperation was an investigation initiated by the NH AG's Drug Task Force that was advanced to the next level working collaboratively with the DEA HIDTA, FBI, and the New Hampshire State Police. This investigation began with undercover purchases of methamphetamine and fentanyl from street level to mid-level drug traffickers in central New Hampshire. Through extensive investigative efforts, this investigation was advanced to an electronic T-3 (wire-tap) investigation resulting in the dismantling of an organization distributing quantities of methamphetamine, fentanyl, and cocaine. This organization spanned the states of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Maine, and ties to Mexican drug cartels. To accomplish such investigations takes additional funding for personnel and equipment as well as continued communication with contributing agencies. The funding for this investigation was a three-tiered effort between the NH AG's office, the New Hampshire State Police, and DEA.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR THE NEW HAMPSHIRE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DRUG TASK FORCE

In 2022, the NH AG's Drug Task Force received funding through the COPS Anti-Heroin Task (AHTF) Program. This funding will enable the Drug Task Force to purchase essential equipment, training, and overtime for

officers to perform their duties more effectively. However, the most pressing need for the DTF is funding for additional grant positions as well as increasing the total amount per grant annually. Presently, the NH AG's DTF will provide \$60,000 annually to a police department who furnishes the DTF with an officer. This amount does not adequately cover the average cost of salary, benefits, training and equipment to outfit an officer. Simply put, this amount does not cover the cost to backfill the vacant officer's position resulting in police departments unable to provide an officer to the DTF. Furthermore, because of the critical shortage of law enforcement in New Hampshire, the majority of police departments cannot provide support due to the need of providing coverage to their own communities.

In closing, the optimum situation for the New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force would be to;

- 1) Continue to receive federal funding through the COPS Anti-Heroin grant to sustain the essential needs of equipment, overtime, and training for our mission;
- 2) Receive sustained, additional funding to increase the number of DTF grant positions available as well as increase the annual amount per grant.

I'd like to thank everyone on the panel for allowing me the opportunity to educate you on the New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force mission as well as our recent successes and present challenges that we have shared with our state and federal partners.

Respectfully,



Ellen M. Arcieri, Commander
New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force