

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 10, 2023

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

We are concerned that the State's plan to reduce Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) funding for multi-jurisdictional task forces, or MJTFs, will undermine local initiatives to combat fentanyl and other dangerous drugs in Washington communities. MJTFs are essential tools to help local communities fight the drug epidemic, and removing dedicated funding threatens their ongoing mission.

For the last seventeen years, Byrne JAG has been a stable source of funding for MJTFs in Washington, enabling them to carry out operations, purchase new equipment and hire personnel. Eliminating Byrne JAG funding for MJTFs — without first guaranteeing an alternative funding source — could prove disastrous for Washington.

MJTFs in Washington need more, not fewer, resources to overcome unprecedented challenges, including record-breaking drug trafficking across the U.S.-Canada border. In February, monthly drug seizures reached the highest levels of the last three years with more than 27,600 pounds of illegal drugs confiscated at the border.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a total of 559,396 fentanyl pills were seized by the Whatcom Gang and Drug Task Force in 2022, significantly up from 142,877 pills in 2021 and 20,050 pills in 2020.<sup>2</sup> MJTFs need dedicated funding to continue keeping fentanyl and other drugs off Washington streets.

While we commend the Washington Department of Commerce's recent announcement to distribute unused Byrne JAG funds from prior years to support MJTFs through June 30, 2024, these task forces must have long-term fiscal security. To better understand the State's approach to supporting MJTFs, we request answers to the following questions:

1. What is the long-term plan to fund MJTFs?
2. Are there alternative state level funding sources for MJTFs?
3. Does the State plan to apply for any other federal funding sources for MJTFs?
4. Will the Department of Commerce's Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force Assessment include outreach to and representation from each MJTF in the state?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent inquiry. We look forward to continuing to work together to keep Washington families safe from fentanyl and other dangerous drugs.

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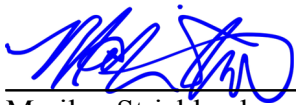
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article272101182.html>

Sincerely,



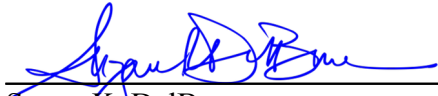
Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



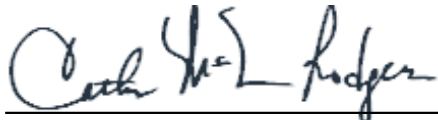
Dan Newhouse  
Member of Congress



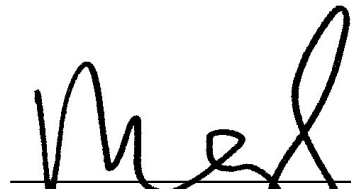
Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress



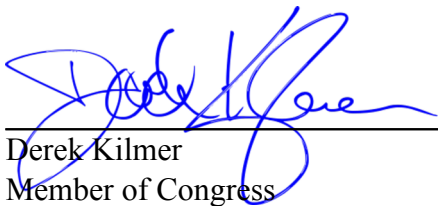
Kim Schrier, M.D.  
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