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November 12th, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Committee
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley,

As President of the Major County Sheriffs' Association (MCSA), I write to you today to express our support for Michael Botticelli to be the next Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). While serving as Acting Director of ONDCP, Mr. Botticelli has dutifully carried out his responsibilities, has been a thoughtful leader and we look forward to continuing our collaborative and transparent relationship with him and his office.

MCSA is comprised of elected Sheriffs from our Nation's largest counties, representing over 100 million Americans. As such, we have a front-line understanding of drug crime and the corrosive impact of drugs on society, public safety and public health. The presence of international trafficking organizations in our towns and cities, the rising abuse of heroin, ongoing diversion of prescription drugs, and the enduring production and use of methamphetamine all represent significant drug problems facing our country.

Beyond the drug threat itself, MCSA remains concerned about the direction of certain aspects of U.S. Federal drug policy, particularly regarding marijuana. While ONDCP has maintained opposition to the legalization of marijuana and continues to highlight the dangers of its use, there remain gross inconsistencies regarding actual enforcement policy of marijuana. Specifically, the Department of Justice and its guidance to rely on State and local authorities to address marijuana activity – despite marijuana remaining illegal under the Controlled Substances Act – continues to challenge the ability of law enforcement to execute the law in a consistent and uniform way. A conflicting and unclear stance on drug policy complicates our ability to do the job that our communities expect us to perform.

Additionally, increasing data suggests that the legalization of marijuana in certain States has resulted in a number of adverse effects, such as higher incidents of drugged driving, growing workplace accidents and rising highway fatalities. Schools are also reporting increased incidents of marijuana diversion to underage students and calls to poison control centers regarding marijuana use are on the uptick. In fact, in October 2014, Governor Hickenlooper of Colorado publicly referred to his state's legalization of marijuana as "reckless." Looking ahead, these problems will continue to exist, especially as additional States consider legalizing marijuana for personal use – the most recent being Alaska, Oregon and the District of Columbia.

As the 113th Congress finishes business in this session, and as 114th Congress quickly approaches, we strongly urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to examine these critical issues in greater depth, particularly from an oversight perspective. A clear and cohesive stance on drug policy is fundamental to effectively tackling this destructive problem and will give law enforcement officers across the country the reinforcement they need to carry out the dangerous duties of their profession with confidence.

We sincerely appreciate Mr. Botticelli and his staffs' continued engagement with MCSA and the law enforcement community on these and other related matters. We also look forward to working with ONDCP and Congress on addressing these pressing and important challenges.

Should you or your staff have any questions or require additional information, I can be reached via the contact information provided on this document.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Lyons". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alan" and the last name "Lyons" clearly distinguishable.

President, Major County Sheriffs' Association
Sheriff-Coroner, Kern County (CA)