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COLONEL
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July 1, 2015

The Honorable Edward Kasemeyer
Chairman,
Senate and Budget Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, Suite 3 West
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chairman,
House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairmen Kasemeyer and McIntosh:

In accordance with the 2014 Joint Chairmen's Report, page 153, the Maryland Department of State Police submits this final report on cannabimimetic agent enforcement. The Department appreciates your interest in the enforcement actions of the Department involving synthetic narcotics.

The Department's enforcement strategy is to identify, investigate and dismantle major drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) regardless of the type of illegal substances they are poisoning our communities with. Our goal is to target the DTOs that are supplying the local dealers throughout our towns and cities across Maryland. The local drug task forces do an outstanding job targeting the lower level dealers that impact their communities. However, they are not equipped to address the next level of dealers on a much larger scale. The Department's statewide authority and focus on the major drug trafficking organizations involved in cross border (state to state) and inter-jurisdictional (county to county) criminal enterprise, enable us to target these organizations and significantly impact crime throughout Maryland and into surrounding states.

The Department has a great working relationship with the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and leads several of their initiatives. The Washington/Baltimore HIDTA is one of approximately thirty specifically identified areas of the United States that support initiatives across the nation.

"Maryland's Finest"



Between March 1, 2013, and June 15, 2015, the Department has investigated 1,282 cross border criminal cases. Many of these cases involved the interception of large quantities of illegal substances, including synthetic narcotics. Between January 1, 2013, and June 15, 2015, the Department, working with our federal and local partners, seized over 3,126 pounds of synthetic narcotics. It is important to note a large majority of these seizures took place before these dangerous substances could be distributed on the streets of our communities.

Synthetic drug investigations have become a priority of law enforcement across the nation. A combined effort of federal, state, and local law enforcement resulted in one of largest and most successful investigations into the synthetic designer drug market. The operation, named Project Synergy, began in December 2012, and, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration, resulted in more than 227 arrests and 416 search warrants served in 35 states, 49 cities and five countries, along with more than \$60 million in cash and assets seized. Over 22,000 pounds of illegal synthetic drugs were seized. Phase II of Project Synergy began in January 2014, and concluded in May 2014. This effort involved 29 states, 200 search warrants, and more than 150 arrests. The culmination of these two operations has resulted in a significant decrease of synthetic marijuana and related substances distributed to Maryland.

According to the Uniform Crime Report for 2013 local and state law enforcement made a reported 472 arrests for the sale or manufacture of synthetic drugs compared to 600 arrests in 2012. There were a reported 1,990 arrests for possession of synthetic drugs in 2013 compared with 1,735 in 2012. The highest number of arrests for manufacturing and sales for 2013 was made in Prince George's County with 134 followed by Baltimore County with 127. As for possession, Anne Arundel County led the state with 699 arrests followed by Calvert County with 238 arrests in 2013. As of today's date, the Uniform Crime Report for 2014 is not complete, so the arrest data is not yet available. The report should be complete by the end of August. The Department will provide the Committees with a copy of the Uniform Crime Report upon its completion.

Since the enactment of this legislation, the Department has seen a significant decrease in synthetic narcotics distribution in all regions of Maryland. While arrests and seizures have occurred in each region of state, no significant synthetic narcotic investigations are noted at this time. The Department's strategy is to follow up on any information pertaining to the distribution of synthetic drugs and to take appropriate enforcement action, to include covert purchases, use of confidential informants and the service of court-ordered search and seizure warrants to disrupt and dismantle the organizations distributing the substances. Additionally, investigators proactively conduct checks of local gas stations and other businesses where these types of substances have been known to be sold in the past.

The Department's efforts go well beyond just the interdiction and seizure of this dangerous substance. Working with our allied law enforcement partners, we continue to identify the large-scale dealers in Maryland who are supplying the local dealers across the state. Additionally, working with our federal partners, we identify, investigate, and

prosecute members of the drug trafficking organizations throughout the country who are supplying Maryland.

In summary, the Maryland Department of State Police remains committed to working with our federal, state, and local partners to detect, disrupt, and dismantle organizations involved in the production, transportation, distribution, and consumption of illegal substances across the nation and every community within Maryland. We will continue to have an impact in this important public safety initiative as we work together to serve and protect our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles A. Travers", written over a faint, illegible stamp.

Major Charles A. Travers
Acting Chief, Criminal Investigation Bureau

WMP:CAT:tw