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U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney's Office
Western District of New York

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Buffalo, New York 14202

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August 28, 2013

Dear Esteemed Superintendent:

As I have done the past few years, I am writing with important information regarding some of the serious issues impacting our teenagers today as a new school year begins to unfold.

Of growing concern to all law enforcement across the District is the emergence of heroin, an illegal narcotic, mixed with fentanyl, a narcotic analgesic that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. Fentanyl is a powerful opiate pain reliever typically used after surgery or to treat patients with severe pain. But fentanyl, like many prescription medications, can be deadly when abused.

Fentanyl mixed with heroin is believed to be responsible for a significant number of deaths and overdoses in the Western New York community. In fact, our Office recently indicted a defendant who is accused of selling a heroin/fentanyl mixture which resulted in the death of an individual.

Many who turn to heroin do so after abusing prescription drugs. As the Nation's fastest growing drug problem, we in law enforcement continue to be concerned about the illegal use of prescription drugs. A recent survey by the Partnership at Drugfree.org found that 24% of high school students--more than 5 million kids--have abused prescription drugs, a 33% increase from 2008.

Our Office, along with our law enforcement partners also continue to keep a close eye on the various "synthetic" drugs, including marijuana, sometimes referred to as "K2" or "Spice," and other stimulants, sometimes sold under such names as "bath salts," "Mr. Happy," and "Incense." While the long term effects of these substances is not yet fully known, the short term reactions include agitation, nausea, vomiting, rapid heartbeat, elevated blood pressure, seizures and hallucinations.

The prosecutors in both our Buffalo and Rochester offices are working extremely hard to bring any person or groups of persons who are trafficking in legal or illegal substances to justice. Arrest and prosecution, however, are only part of the solution. With your assistance, we must continue to educate the students, their parents and the public about the dangers and potential consequences of all of these substances.

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A valuable resource in this effort is the Partnership at Drugfree.org (drugfree.org) which provides very helpful information for school administrators and parents. Enclosed with this letter, you will also find a one-page, easy to read Drug Guide for Parents.

I would be remiss if I did not once again share with you my concerns about the technological threats our teenagers face today. While computers, cellular telephones and the internet are valuable learning and communication tools, they can also lead to danger if not properly monitored.

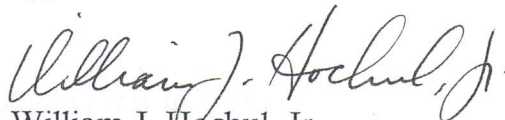
The dangers can consist of stolen identities, and even worse, stolen innocence and freedom. Over the last year, our Office has prosecuted eight defendants for crimes involving human trafficking. These cases included 14 victims, the vast majority teenagers. In many of these cases, contact between the defendant and victim originated through the internet, on social media websites and online advertisements. The numerous child pornography cases we prosecute also invariably involve use of the internet.

A second enclosure, the document entitled "A Message to Parents and Teens" contains additional information about the dangers of both electronic communication and drug abuse. I encourage you to share this information with your staff, teachers, parents and students, posting it on your website, including it in your parent or school newsletters, and hanging it on bulletin boards. An electronic copy is also available for your website or email dissemination.

Should you desire any further information, please contact Public Affairs Officer Barbara Burns at 716-843-5817 or barbara.burns@usdoj.gov. Members of our Office are also available to speak to students and parents. It is my belief that by working proactively together, we can help prevent problems before they arise.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



William J. Hochul, Jr.
United States Attorney,
Western District of New York