

# Cumberland County Jail Board of Visitors Annual Report



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## **JAIL OVERVIEW**

The Cumberland County Jail is the largest county jail in Maine, serving a diverse population. The facility operates with a mission to provide a safe, secure, humane, and cost-effective environment for individuals detained under the jurisdiction of the county. The jail maintains accreditation through the American Correctional Association (ACA), the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), and is certified under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

The Cumberland County Jail also houses federal detainees under agreements with the United States Marshals Service (USMS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). As of 2024, the facility holds 58 federal detainees, and the jail receives \$150 per detainee per day for housing them. Due to this federal contract, the jail undergoes annual audits by USMS and ICE to ensure compliance with federal detention standards, including access to legal counsel, detainee rights, and grievance procedures.

Federal detainees are entitled to legal representation and advocacy, including access to the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP). ILAP provides legal aid, know-your-rights presentations, and assistance with immigration cases for eligible detainees. The Board of Visitors recommends ensuring consistent access to ILAP and other advocacy organizations to support detainees facing asylum claims, immigration court proceedings, or removal defense. Additionally, the Board will monitor whether expanded ILAP office hours or virtual consultations are necessary to meet the needs of the detainee population.

## **CUMBERLAND COUNTY JAIL BOARD OF VISITORS**

Title 30-A: Municipalities and Counties

Chapter 13: County Jails and Jailers

Per the statute, the county commissioner shall examine the jail in their county and take necessary precautions to ensure the security of prisoners, prevent infection and sickness, and accommodate them.

This is accomplished via the Cumberland County Jail Board of Visitors. Additionally, the Board of Visitors (BOV) per (Title 30-A 1651) also have the following obligation: "Each BOV shall inspect the correction facility to which it is assigned, subject to reasonable restrictions required by the sheriff to ensure the security of the jail and make recommendations to the sheriff with respect to residents who are mentally ill."

## **JAIL BOARD OF VISITORS MEMBERS**

### **Colleen Hilton, Chair**

Colleen is a retired health care executive. She served as the President of Continuing Care for Northern Light Health until 2024. She served three terms as the Mayor of Westbrook and was appointed to two Gubernatorial Boards.

### **Garrett Stewart, Member**

Garrett is a Maintenance worker for the South Portland School System. He has a history of union organizing. He has been on the Executive Committee of the AFL-CIO and is a South Maine Labor Council board member. He resides in Portland.

### **William Baker, Member**

William Baker is a retired law enforcement officer who has served as a police chief in Maine and Massachusetts. He has an extensive history in corrections and public safety and is also an attorney. Bill currently works for the NFL.

### **Amanda Place, Member**

Amanda is a licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor and Certified Clinical Supervisor. Amanda is on the Survivor Advocacy Board for Prebble Street and is an advocate for recovery and survivors of human trafficking. Amanda has worked in the field of substance abuse for a variety of local organizations for the past 8 years. She is currently the Program Director for residential services at Recovery Connections of Maine.

### **Karen White, Member**

Karen White is a lifelong educator having worked in the Portland Public Schools, and is recently retired from the Education Department in the Community College System. Karen has the personal experience of having an incarcerated family member. She has an interest and understanding of the potential needs of inmates and cares about how those needs are met.

### **Hailey Virusso, Member**

Hailey Virusso is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Director of Preble Street's Anti-Trafficking Services (ATS). With over ten years of experience, Hailey has built her career on the development and provision of supports and services to best meet the needs of Maine's most vulnerable communities, including systems-involved youth, youth experiencing homelessness, and survivors of human trafficking. Her work is framed in the understanding that these issues are intersectional, focusing on the systems that impact our community members' access to safety and stability. Joining the Cumberland County Jail's Board of Visitors has allowed Hailey to integrate her understanding of the impact the carceral system has on survivors of trafficking to

inform the development of trauma-informed practices and enhance identification efforts to improve survivors' health outcomes.

#### Kiley Wilkens-O'Brien, Member

Kiley Wilkens-O'Brien is a behavioral health strategist specializing in the intersection of mental health and the criminal justice system. She currently serves as the Board's mental health-focused member. Kiley is a nationally recognized leader regarding ethical crisis response and dignity-driven suicide postvention practices. As a consultant, she provides mitigation expertise for the Maine Commission for Public Defense Services.

### **FACILITY INSPECTIONS & CONDITIONS**

The Board of Visitors conducted inspections of the facility and engaged in interviews with both staff and residents. During these visits, the facility was observed to be clean and well-maintained, with professional interactions between staff and incarcerated individuals. The Board met on January 11, 2024, September 18, 2024, and November 20, 2024, to review facility operations and address ongoing concerns.

### **INMATE WELFARE & RIGHTS**

Medical and mental health services remain a key focus for the facility. In response to recommendations from the previous year, the jail transitioned to a new electronic health record system, CorEMR, which has improved efficiency in medical service delivery. The medical team, under the leadership of our HSA, includes a medical director, a behavioral health director, nursing staff, and dental services. The facility has also made efforts to reduce critical incidents in the Special Housing Unit and facility wide, implementing strategies that have significantly lowered the use of force incidents. The jail currently supports 135 inmates in medication-assisted treatment programs.

There were two accidental inmate deaths during this reporting period. The operational mortality review of the inmate's death found that the facility was largely compliant with mandatory standards regarding inmate supervision, intake procedures, and emergency response protocols. The jail properly reported the death to relevant agencies, maintained accurate facility logs, and ensured that high-risk security areas were monitored. Staff followed appropriate protocols for intake screening, identifying medical and mental health needs, and documenting supervision intervals. However, the review identified a non-compliance issue regarding correctional staff CPR certifications, as some personnel had expired credentials at the time of the incident. This deficiency was corrected immediately, and all staff have since obtained current certifications. The review concluded that supervision requirements were met, and no additional procedural failures were identified. Moving forward, the facility should

continue to monitor staff training compliance to ensure adherence to life-saving certification requirements

## **GRIEVANCES**

The grievance system remains an essential function of facility oversight. Facility operations also include ongoing efforts to recruit and retain corrections officers, with particular attention to training programs designed to support a diverse and growing workforce.

The number of offender grievances filed during this annual review was 291, which is average based on the census population. The statistics are maintained for each category, which was reviewed with the Lieutenant overseeing the process, and no significant concerns or patterns were noted.

## **FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT & TRANSPARENCY**

Financial oversight includes the use of external grants and donations to support jail programming. The facility received an \$80,000 donation from The Point Church a couple of years ago to assist inmates with housing, transportation, and clothing upon release. Additionally, the facility has benefited from the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP), which provides funding for reentry services and medication-assisted treatment. The next iteration of this program, the COSSUP Pathways for ME grant, which began in October 2023 and it will last until the end of September 2026. The Sheriff is also exploring opportunities to leverage opioid settlement funds to further expand treatment options for individuals nearing release.

The Board has not assessed commissary pricing and affordability, but intends to conduct a review of pricing compared to community retailers. It was noted that inmates do not have access to hair ties, which presents both hygiene and dignity issues. This will be investigated further.

## **STAFFING & OPERATIONS**

The jail is currently staffed by approximately 140 employees, including corrections officers, supervisory staff, and civilian personnel. Major Tim Kortess serves as the jail administrator, supported by Captain Dani Demers, responsible for operations, and Captain Erik Frigon, overseeing administrative support services. The facility has a rated capacity of 570 inmates but operates with an average daily population of 386 due to staffing constraints. The partnership with Armor Health ensures that inmates receive comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral health care during their confinement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS & FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS**

The Board of Visitors presents the following recommendations for 2025. The jail should ensure compliance with updated statutes governing the Board's role in facility oversight. Security measures should be enhanced through additional surveillance cameras and upgraded monitoring software, particularly to address concerns raised by correctional officers regarding activity around the facility perimeter. The USMS may require that cells be upgraded to eliminate metal beds which pose self-harm risk. The Board would encourage funders to support this upgrade facility-wide, as this risk should be mitigated for all inmates, not just federal detainees.

Increased diversity within the corrections workforce necessitates additional support and training for both new recruits and existing staff to foster workplace success and retention. The Board also encourages continuing efforts to improve mental health services and reduce incidents in the Special Housing Unit.

The Cumberland County Jail remains committed to the safety, well-being, and rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals while maintaining the integrity of facility operations. The Board of Visitors will continue to support and monitor these efforts in collaboration with the jail administration, ensuring that the facility meets statutory requirements and best practices in correctional management.

## **JAIL ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

The Jail Administration is exploring cost-effective temporary and permanent safeguards to improve perimeter security of the facility due to the transient challenges of an open campus. These safeguards could include staffing posts, such as mobile patrols, Physical barriers, such as fencing, and additional monitoring capabilities with enhanced video camera coverage.

Regarding increased offender mental challenges, the Jail Administration is exploring alternative cell-molded furnishings with a ligature-resistant design that reduces offender safety concerns.

The security and mental health staff meet weekly to discuss and strategize engagement with offenders who have mental health challenges to manage this type of population properly. This practice will continue and be adjusted to best practices.

The Board also recommends that the Correction Staff receive a new and improved locker room area to store their uniforms and equipment. The current lockers are outdated and too small, not in line with the equipment the staff needs to use daily. The jail administration will review funding for locker room upgrade.