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Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of AFA and HHS committees. My name is Gina Morin and I'm a resident of Auburn. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I oppose the governor's proposed budget with over \$16 million going to the Department of Public Safety for more state police positions. With them already having vacant positions available, there's no justification for needing to hire more.

Investing in more policing does not provide care for those struggling with mental health and substance use and Crisis-receiving centers in Aroostook and Kennebec Counties connect people to care so they can bypass jails and emergency rooms. Investing in centers like these are what offer hope of a better life.

When I had an undiagnosed mental illness, I separated myself from everything, especially my community. Until I was able to get the therapy I needed, I felt hopelessly inadequate. Getting that proper care was essential. I finally understood I have a mental illness and developed coping skills to live with it. Those skills are what help keep me stable. More investment is needed to expand treatment because people are falling through the cracks and ending up in the criminal justice system.

As a former corrections officer, I learned that jailing those with mental illness and substance use disorders only complicates their lives. It just separates them from their families and from obtaining stable housing. And it doesn't actually solve the fact that they aren't getting the treatment they deserve.

I ask all of you to vote to block this budget proposal. Will you lead with love or fund criminalization?

Thank you