

MAINE SERVICE CENTERS COALITION

60 Community Drive • Augusta, Maine 04330 • (207) 623-8428

Testimony of the Maine Service Centers Coalition LD 852, An Act to Reduce the Property Tax Burden by Adequately Funding County Jail Operations

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, the Maine Service Centers Coalition is submitting testimony in support of LD 852, An Act to Reduce the Property Tax Burden by Adequately Funding County Jail Operations.

The Maine Service Centers Coalition, comprised of 26 towns and cities across the state, articulates the importance of healthy and thriving service center communities, advocates for public policy that supports and contributes to the economic and social viability of our communities, and collaborates with municipal officials, legislators, state agencies and nonprofits to pursue quality of life for all who live and work in our state.

As we have all witnessed, costs have risen for state agencies, municipalities, households and businesses across Maine and, most likely, will continue to go up. The same holds true for county and regional jails, where the costs to operate these facilities have grown, their roles have expanded, and the state's reliance on them remains. However, state funding has not kept up with the escalating costs these jails are experiencing. That leaves our home and business owners paying higher county assessments through increases to their property taxes.

As the title of this bill states, adequately funding county jail operations, indeed, will reduce the tax burden on property owners in each of our service center communities. While our municipalities and, in turn, our property taxpayers dutifully pay our share for county and regional jails, it is necessary for the state to fulfill its obligation to appropriately fund these facilities in order to help alleviate the tax burden that now falls squarely onto our property owners who are in desperate need of relief.

We respectfully ask you to give every consideration to increasing the state's share of funding for county and regional jails as outlined in LD 852.

Thank you for your time.