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Testimony of Rep. Suzanne Salisbury in support of

**LD 852, An Act to Reduce the Property Tax Burden by Adequately
Funding County Jail Operations**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed members on the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Sue Salisbury and I represent House District 128, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today to speak in support of LD 852, An Act to Reduce the Property Tax Burden by Adequately Funding County Jail Operations.

Over the last month, this committee has been discussing county jail funding. When I presented my bill, LD 719, An Act to Amend the Share of State Funding for the County Jail Operations Fund, we knew more bills were coming. I am a co-sponsor of Rep. Ducharme's bill, and as I indicated when I presented my bill, I didn't know which bill would be the best, but I know it is time to address county jail funding. Currently in statute, county jails are allocated a flat amount of \$20,342,104. A flat amount does not account for the increased costs of running a county jail. As the "emergency rooms" of our prison system, we are mandating a lot of care and services be provided. As a state, we need to fund jails adequately and not put additional burdens directly on the taxpayers.

The presentation of these county jail funding bills has led to conversations between the Department of Corrections, County Commissioners, county jails and other stakeholders. Together, we have been working to improve the lines of communication, which will provide clarity around data sharing and funding requests. One of the most significant areas of concern is around medication-assisted treatment. That funding was not added to the Governor's budget. We know this program is a success, and we shouldn't let it end due to lack of funding.

Conversations with all of the stakeholders are still happening, and I hope that the committee will allow us to keep meeting so that we can form a solution, which may be a combined bill.

Thank you for your consideration.