

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to

LD 1775, *An Act to Authorize the Issuance of a Revenue Bond to Upgrade County Jails to Meet the Corrections Needs of Maine's Counties*

May 14, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, my name is Kate Dufour and I am submitting written testimony in opposition to LD 1775 on behalf of the Legislative Policy Committee, which establishes MMA's position on bills of municipal relevance.

Although municipal leaders understand and appreciate the intent behind LD 1775, the proposed \$87 million revenue bond provides a short-term solution to a problem that has been left unresolved for decades. Without a doubt, investments in physical buildings and interior structures necessary to ensure adequate safety are important, but so is ongoing funding for the direct services provided to residents under the care of county correctional officers. This includes providing access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, supplies, medication, rehabilitation services, and education and training.

Additionally, the burdens being placed on county officials to provide services are not only growing in number, but also in complexity, as the "box and cot" model of years past is no longer appropriate, and rightfully so. Residents in county facilities are dealing with serious mental health and substance use issues that need to be addressed but should not be provided in a county jail environment nor funded by the property taxpayers.

From the municipal perspective, the preferred approach is for the state to provide sustainable and predictable funding for county operations. Under the current model, the state not only decides what county services are to be provided, including determining who is sentenced to serve in a facility and for what length of time, but also the state's share of those costs. Unfortunately, to date this model has left the property taxpayers to fund the lion's share of mandated county services. This often results in reductions in funding for municipal programs and services, which must be made to keep burdens placed on the property taxpayers at bay, to the extent possible.

Again, rather than providing counties with access to one-time revenues, municipal leaders urge the Legislature to implement other long-term solutions. As examples, the funding solutions proposed in [LD 852, *An Act to Reduce the Property Tax Burden by Adequately Funding County Jail Operations*](#), also sponsored by Rep. Ducharme on behalf of the MMA's policy committee, and [LD 719, *An Act to Amend the Share of State Funding for the County Jail Operations Fund*](#), sponsored by Rep. Salisbury on behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association, provide predictable levels of funding for county jail operations.

Thank you for considering the municipal perspective on this important issue.