



March 10, 2026

Senator Margaret Rotundo, Senate Chair

Representative Drew Gattine, House Chair

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

100 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Support for Additional County Jail Funding in the Supplemental Budget

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

As local Chiefs of Police, we write to you today to express our strong support for including additional funding for county jail operations in the current supplemental budget. Our municipal departments rely daily on the essential services provided by Maine's fifteen county jails, which serve as an indispensable pillar of our state's unified criminal justice system.

The current funding model has reached a critical tipping point. While jails are a state-mandated component of the justice process, the State currently covers only a small fraction of their operational costs—estimated at roughly 14-15%. The remainder of this financial burden falls squarely on local property taxpayers. As police chiefs, we see the strain this puts on our municipal partners, who must balance the escalating costs of correctional services against the need to fund our own local public safety initiatives.

We specifically urge the Committee to consider the following:

- **Support the \$8 Million Supplemental Request:** We back the recommendation to include \$8,000,000 in the supplemental budget to address immediate shortfalls in jail operations.
- **Address Rising Operational Costs:** Jails are facing unprecedented pressure from rising healthcare, labor, and boarding costs. Without state intervention, these costs will continue to drive double-digit property tax increases in our communities.
- **Strengthen the State-County Partnership:** The state dictates the laws, court systems, and standards by which these jails must operate. It is only fair that the state provides a level of funding commensurate with these mandates to ensure a
- stable and sustainable system.



Paris Police Department – Michael J. Ward - Chief of Police

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Local police value the professionalism and critical role of our county sheriffs and jail administrators. Properly funding these facilities is not just a "county issue"—it is a fundamental requirement for the safety and fiscal health of every municipality in Maine. Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to a fair and effective justice system.

Sincerely,

Michael J Ward
Chief of Police