

County of Aroostook

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February 29, 2024

TO: Honorable Members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee

Honorable Members of the Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee

FR: Norman L. Fournier, County Commissioner, Aroostook County

RE: **Aroostook County Testimony in support of LD 2214 –2024 Supplemental Budget (Part A, p. A-29) regarding county jail funding**

Dear Senator Rotundo; Representative Sachs and Members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee;

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

My name is Norman Fournier. I am a resident of Wallagrass in northern Aroostook County and serve as the District 3 representative on the Aroostook Board of County Commissioners and I am here today to testify on behalf of the Aroostook County Commissioners in support of LD 2214, specifically Part A-29 regarding county jail funding.

I have served consecutively for the last 35 years in this position and I can tell you much has changed over the years in the incarceration and mandated treatment of inmates in our county jail system. One of the most significant and costly changes we have faced is the need to provide medically assisted treatment (MAT) and substance use disorder treatment (SUD) within our county jail.

In FY 2023, Aroostook County spent \$144,000 in our SUD and MAT program. This includes the following:

\$13,000 per year in counseling for participants and screening into the program;

\$29,000 per year for the medical provider that prescribes the medications and provides treatment;

COURTHOUSE, 144 SWEDEN STREET, SUITE 1, CARIBOU, MAINE 04736

Tel: (207) 493-3318 Fax: (207) 493-3491 E-mail: ryan@aroostook.me.us Website: www.aroostook.me.us

\$55,000 per year for the extra nursing staff for managing, passing the medication and service coordination with outside providers up to 28 hours per week; and \$27,000 per year for the actual cost of the medication.

In addition to these hard costs, security and safety of the program is an absolute necessity. These costs include the safety procedures required by our corrections staff to monitor the MSUD program; the escorting of medical staff during the medication pass, medical screening, drug screening and counseling services. All together these additional costs are over \$20,000 per year for Aroostook County.

We support this appropriation because our local taxpayers are currently burdened with the majority of these expenses through the county tax. 80% of county jail operations statewide are paid for by the local property taxpayer. If the State share declines, that amount is made up through an increase in the local property taxes. We have no alternatives.

Aroostook County appreciates and supports the Governor's proposed additional funding for these programs within county jails for FY 25, recognizing that a shortfall will remain in FY 24 and the years following FY 25. Therefore, we would respectfully request consideration be given to include a similar \$4 million contribution for FY 24 and express this committee's commitment to an ongoing increase in county jail funding equal to at least \$4 million per year.

In closing, I thank the members of this committee for their consideration and if I can answer any questions, I would be happy to do so.

Sincerely,



Norman L. Fournier
County Commissioner
District #3 – Aroostook County