

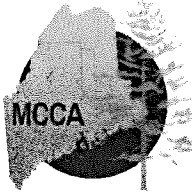
I MCCA

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Lauren Haven
Administrator

LD 719 – An Act to Amend the Share of State Funding for the County Jail Operations Fund

March 3, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Tim Curtis, Somerset County Administrator, President of the Maine Association of County Clerks, Administrators and Managers (MACCAM).

On behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association (MCCA), I am offering testimony in support of LD719. This legislation seeks to ease the burden on local property taxpayers in regards to the cost of funding County Jails.

As the attached documents indicate, property taxpayers carry 80% of the funding responsibility, but have no control over the costs of incarceration. The State, however, determines the vast majority of jail costs from the creation of law to the court indictment, trial, conviction and sentencing processes. Furthermore, the State determines the standards by which Jails must operate. Yet, even with the Governor's initiative to add \$4M to the current Operations Fund, the State only contributes 20% to the cost. This is NOT an equal partnership.

Jails continue to work on efforts to consolidate programs and control costs, yet the same drivers that force the Department of Corrections to increase their budgets impact the Counties. We are all impacted by the same labor costs, insurance increases, and rising food and energy prices.

LD719 seeks to raise the State's contribution from approximately 20% to 35%. County Governments are forced to either run their jails at a budget deficit or increase the burden to the property tax payer; in many cases, counties do both. On any given day there are approximately 1,500 individuals incarcerated in a County facility, but that does not reflect the fact that County employees intake and process in excess of 30,000 individuals each year.

County Jails are the trauma center, seeing individuals in crisis, administering treatment for mental health and substance use issues, without the ability to discharge or refuse care.

Thank you for continuing to engage in this ongoing discussion.

Tim Curtis, Somerset County Administrator

The County Jail as a Trauma Center – Annual Data

30,000	The number of individuals arrested and brought to a County facility).
16,000	Individuals taken through a Screening Process within 72 hours.
9,800	Individuals screened and found to have Substance Use Disorder and/or Mental Health Diagnosis
7,800	Individuals who spend some time in a County Jail awaiting trial

Jail Cooperative Cost Sharing Efforts

- Regular meetings of County Jail Administrators - Discussions include...
 - Centralizing Transportation Services
 - Long-Term basis to house different offender classifications in order to maximize bed management and reduce staffing requirements
 - Establish a central-located secure hospital wing at an existing hospital that would house offenders that need hospital-level care
- Boarding overflow inmates at reduced rates
- Vendor Sharing for Pre-Trial Services, Food Services & Medical Services
- Mid-coast counties hire consultants to help reduce jail costs (Waldo, Knox, Lincoln & Sagadahoc)

\$129,071,657.00 – 2025 Budgeted Jail Costs

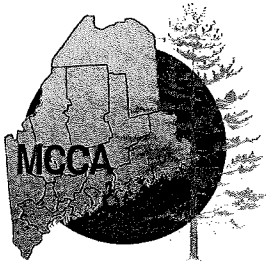
THE STATE CONTROLS 80% OF THE COSTS OF INCARCERATION, AND PAYS 20% OF THE COSTS.

\$24,342,104

(Including the Governor's Initiative for MAT)

THE COUNTY PROPERTY TAX PAYER HAS NO CONTROL OVER THE COST OF INCARCERATION, AND PAYS 80% OF THE COSTS.

\$104,729,553



Maine County Commissioners Association

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LD 719, An Act to Amend the Share of State Funding for the County Jail Operations Fund

Talking Points

- **What does LD 719 do?** LD 719 sets a 35% “target” for state support of legally required county jail operating costs. 35% is a “target” that we hope and expect the Legislature to meet, but as with 55% state support for local schools, the Legislature is able to make a determination in every budget cycle whether they can meet the target. Without the bill, there is no target. With this bill, there is a fair target, well below the level of state support for schools.
- **The State primarily controls the cost of operating county jails, not the counties**
 - The Legislature controls what activities should be criminalized with jail time.
 - Law enforcement agencies control whether to arrest an individual and incarcerate them.
 - Courts and prosecutors control whether to charge an individual with a crime and hold them in jail pending trial.
 - By law, county jails are required to incarcerate individuals awaiting trial. 90% of county jail residents are pretrial.
 - By law, county jails must incarcerate individuals for sentences of less than nine months, individuals unable to stand trial, and individuals that the State or federal government are temporarily unable to accommodate.
 - Courts control whether to convict and sentence an individual to serve time in county jail.
 - The Legislature and Commissioner of Corrections establish jail operating standards.
- **County jails have become the place of last resort when other support systems fail**
 - Approximately 75% of individuals housed in county jails are classified as having a substance use disorder and 60% are classified as having a mental health disorder. They end up in county jail when other systems don’t work or are unavailable.
 - While the average daily headcount of those housed in county jails statewide is approximately 1,500, each year county jails intake over 30,000 individuals.
- **The State’s share of funding is insufficient and has shrunk:**
 - Recently, the State has only contributed, on average, 20% of the total operating costs of county jails.
 - This year, county jail operating costs are estimated to be \$127M, and the proposed biennial budget for FY27 would provide a state subsidy of just \$24.4M, only 17% of county jail operating costs.
 - While healthcare and wage inflation has caused incarceration costs to go up substantially, including for the Maine Department of Corrections, the percentage of state support for county jails has actually gone down.
- **This bill is about local property taxpayers.** County government is primarily funded by assessments on municipalities, which are in turn paid by local property taxpayers. County jails comprise half of the budget for most counties. If the state share of jail costs were to increase, it would greatly relieve the burden on local property taxpayers.