

TESTIMONY BY**RYAN D. PELLETIER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR****AROOSTOOK COUNTY****IN SUPPORT OF LD 852 "AN ACT TO REDUCE THE PROPERTY TAX
BURDEN BY ADEQUATELY FUNDING COUNTY JAIL OPERATIONS"**

Senator Beebe-Center; Representative Hasenfus & Distinguished
Members of the Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee:

My name is Ryan Pelletier and I serve as the County Administrator
for Aroostook County and I am here today to testify in support of LD
852 "An Act to Reduce the Property Tax Burden by Adequately
Funding County Jail Operations."

Tomorrow, I will be presenting the proposed FY 25-26 County budget
to the Aroostook County Finance Committee.

The proposed Jail Budget is up 6.4% over last years approved
budget. All things considered that is actually quite good given the
new costs we are experiencing this year such as the Paid Family
Medical Leave Act; increases in our contractual expenses such as
our mandated medical services including medical assisted
treatment; and a new cost for our Jail Records Management System
due to policy changes with the FCC that now requires certain phone
calls and other charges can no longer be charged to
inmates. Previously those funds offset these expenses but are no
longer allowed.

As “good” as a 6.4% increase might sound, the terrible news I need to share today is our NON PROPERTY TAX REVENUES that we use to offset the budget are down by **33%** over last year. This includes \$341,025 less in Community Corrections funding from the State and \$125,000 in supplemental funding.

Last year, our County Commissioners utilized \$200,000 in General Fund balance to offset the jail. Basically a bail out. I will not propose that this year. It’s high time the truth be known about the state of county jail funding in this state. Every year it seems County governments are left begging for relief here in Augusta.

Make no mistake about it, these costs will be put on the backs of the local property taxpayers. I have no choice. I can’t open the doors and let the inmates go home and I can’t lay off correction officers and tell the inmates to supervise themselves.

Please do what you know is right for the people of Maine. Please vote to support LD 852 and stop the insanity of requiring local property taxpayers to pick up more of the burden of a system that is broken.

Thank you for your time and consideration.