



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduction 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 honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee for Appropriations and Financial Affairs. I am Jack Ducharme. I have the honor of representing the towns of Madison, Norridgewock, and Cornville in House District 71 in the legislature. I am before you today as the sponsor of 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. I am sponsoring this bill at the request of Commissioner Andre Cushing, President of the Maine County Commissioners Association.

There are only 14 county facilities (Two Bridges jointly serves Lincoln & Sagadahoc Counties), Waldo has a 72-hour hold, there is also a 72 hour hold facility in Caribou that helps communities in northern Aroostook, due to the distance to the county jail in Houlton. Maine’s county jails serve the requirements for all levels of law enforcement for detaining those arrested and awaiting trial. Each county provides support for these jails through property taxes and a legislatively required state allocation of funds, the amount of which has remained fixed at \$20.4 million since FY 2022. As many of us who serve on this committee know costs have risen each year since this allocation was established. Just in this year’s budget requests from our Department of Corrections there was almost a 10% increase.

Our county jails have been referred to as emergency rooms, they never know how many will enter each day, how long they will remain in custody or more significantly what health condition they will present but, you can count on many of them needing care beyond the capability of services available in the jails.

The nature of today's inmate population requires more attention to healthcare related issues, either substance use or mental health related challenges and, in many cases, co-occurring issues that county jails were not designed to handle. Most county jails do not have in-house medical services; they rely on local hospitals or medical and mental health providers for services.

District 71
Cornville, Madison, and Norridgewock

Examples of health issues facing arrestees:

Chronic diseases:

Hypertension, diabetes, heart problems, and arthritis are common among jail inmates.

Infectious diseases:

Correctional facilities can be high-risk settings for the spread of infectious diseases like influenza, COVID-19, tuberculosis, and hepatitis.

Traumatic brain injuries:

Inmates are also more likely to experience traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) and concussions.

Many arrestees come to these facilities with multiple comorbidities leading to many more health care struggles for jail personnel to deal with.

Factors Contributing to Co-Occurrence:

Risk factors:

People with justice system involvement are more likely to experience risk factors for mental health disorders, substance use, and infectious diseases, such as unstable housing, mental health problems, and a history of trauma.

Incarceration environment:

The stressful and often challenging environment of incarceration can exacerbate existing mental health conditions and contribute to SUDs.

Limited access to treatment:

Inadequate access to mental health and substance use treatment can perpetuate the cycle of co-occurring disorders.

This bond will provide some resources to help jails refit to better address the needs of inmates struggling with these healthcare issues. It will allow for better overall treatment within a jail facility rather than the complications and cost of transporting and monitoring inmates in a hospital emergency department setting.

Bond funds will be allocated by the Finance Authority of Maine, after consultation with the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections, on a pro rata population basis to county jails and to jails used as holding facilities for the detention of adult inmates, whether they are detained pending a trial or other court proceeding or sentenced for periods of up to 72 hours. Funds must be used to improve county jails and holding facilities to allow jails or holding facilities to accommodate inmates with a substance use

disorder and assist them in obtaining treatment and recovery and to supplement the needs of jails and holding facilities that have potential funding shortfalls.

This revenue bond proposal is for a 10-year bond. It is proposed that it would be repaid using a combination of revenues from the opioid settlement funds and the funds from the liquor contract.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to this request. While there are many other things that need funding, it is critical that we look toward the future and plan for those needs. This bond is forward thinking and will be helpful managing the overall corrections system of the State of Maine.

Cordially,

Jack Ducharme