



Sheriff Troy Morton, President

MAINE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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February 24, 2026

Testimony of Sheriff Troy Morton LD 2212:

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Criminal Justice and Public Safety: My name is Sheriff Troy Morton. I am the Sheriff of Penobscot County, and I have the privilege of serving as President of the Maine Sheriffs' Association. I also serve on the Board of Directors for the National Sheriffs' Association.

The Maine Sheriffs' Association has taken a position **not to support LD 2212, *An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027.***

This supplemental budget does not address the growing and critical needs of the county correctional system. While the demands placed on county corrections have drastically changed over time, the funding mechanism has not. County correctional facilities are heavily impacted by state policies and operations, yet they continue to be funded primarily through local property taxes.

County corrections have met—and in many cases exceeded—expectations and best practices. Over the past decade, counties have significantly expanded programming, medical and mental health services, medication-assisted treatment (MAT), and pretrial services. Additionally, the Maine County Corrections Professional Standards Council continues to work diligently to ensure all correctional facilities operate consistently and in accordance with the most current best practices.

Despite these efforts, counties face numerous cost drivers that remain entirely outside of local control. These include the backlog in the judicial system, evolving Maine Department of Corrections standards, and a mental health system that lacks sufficient capacity to serve individuals who are left languishing in hospital emergency departments and county correctional facilities.

The Maine Sheriffs' Association, along with the Maine County Commissioners Association and the Maine Municipal Association, has remained proactive and creative in seeking legislative solutions to help alleviate these extreme cost drivers. During the previous legislative session, we pursued legislation in the Judiciary Committee aimed at addressing probation offenders. That bill failed after it was determined that the cost to the Maine Department of Corrections would significantly increase, further confirming that these costs are currently being absorbed by county property taxpayers.

This session, we took a different approach through the Health and Human Services Committee by proposing legislation to reduce the length of time individuals who are seriously mentally ill or court-ordered remain in county correctional facilities after being placed with the Department of Health and Human Services. That bill was defeated due to a lack of available capacity to move individuals out of county facilities.

Another recent example includes the Maine Sheriffs' Association's opposition to changes in Maine Department of Corrections standards related to new admissions into county jails. These modified standards significantly impact the screening and admission processes used by both local and state law enforcement agencies.

County corrections are a **statewide responsibility**. Many of the most significant cost drivers stem directly from state policies and state system limitations. These costs should not be borne solely by local property taxpayers.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to provide the recommended funding outlined in the County Commissioners' request.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.