

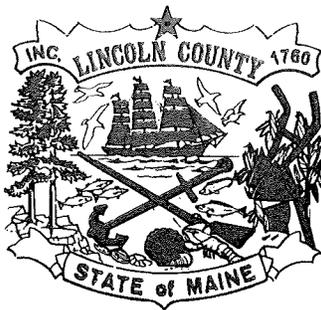
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***LD 2212 – Request for Additional Funding for County Jail Operations Fund in FY26 and FY27***

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Gattine, and Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the **Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committees**.

My name is Carrie Kipfer, and I am the County Administrator for Lincoln County. I'm here today to speak in support of the Maine county jail funding request, particularly as it relates to the collaborative work happening in the Midcoast region including Two Bridges Regional Jail.

Over the past several years, Two Bridges Regional Jail, which is operated by Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties, has been working on a collaboration with fellow Midcoast counties. Most recently, Knox County has shifted their inmates to TBRJ in an effort to save Knox property taxpayers from the ever-rising jail costs. The counties have worked intentionally and creatively with neighboring jails to deliver services more efficiently and effectively. **This collaboration has not been theoretical — it has been practical, operational, and cost-conscious.**

Through regional partnerships, TBRJ has shared transportation resources, coordinated medical and mental health services, collaborated on programming, and streamlined staffing. In a rural state like Maine, this type of cooperation is not optional — it is essential. By leveraging regional models, we are reducing duplication, maximizing staffing, and ensuring consistent standards of care across county lines.

**But even with these efficiencies, the fiscal strain on counties has grown unsustainable.**

State funding has not kept pace with the true cost of operating safe and efficient correctional facilities. County jails are required to provide medical care, medication-assisted treatment, suicide prevention, and increasingly complex behavioral health interventions. We are housing individuals with acute mental illness, substance use disorders, and medical needs that would have once been managed in hospitals or treatment facilities. Jails have become de facto behavioral health centers — without the funding structure to support that shift.

As a result, counties have been forced to fill the gap. Property taxpayers are shouldering costs that exceed a reasonable state funding model. In many counties, jail budgets are consuming a growing percentage of overall county expenditures, crowding out other essential services. This is not sustainable, nor is it equitable for taxpayers.

The Midcoast model demonstrates that counties are doing their part. We are collaborating. We are regionalizing where possible. We are pursuing efficiencies. **But collaboration alone cannot solve a structural funding shortfall.**

If we want safe communities, conditions of confinement that meet the Department of Corrections' standards, access to treatment, and professional correctional staff, then the state must fully and predictably fund a fair share of the jail system.

Today's request is not about expansion. It is about stability. It is about preserving a regional system that is working hard to innovate while carrying a disproportionate financial burden.

The Maine counties **respectfully urge you to support the county jail funding request** and ensure that the partnership between the state and counties is restored to balance.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Carrie Kipfer  
Lincoln County Administrator