

To the Editor,

As a [Maine](#) property taxpayer, I am writing to urge the Legislature to appropriately fund our county jails at **\$28 million** for the upcoming fiscal year. For too long, the state has allowed its share of jail funding to erode, leaving local homeowners to pick up the slack through ever-increasing property taxes.

County jails are the "emergency rooms" of Maine's criminal justice system, yet they are being squeezed by rising costs for medical care, behavioral health services, and labor. While the state budget has grown by over \$1 billion, the baseline funding for jails has remained stagnant at roughly \$20 million for years. This neglect has dropped the state's contribution to approximately **15%** of total operating costs, well below the equitable **20% ratio** that was once the standard.

The current \$8 million funding gap is not just a line item; it is an **unfunded mandate** that translates directly into higher tax bills for our communities. Counties like Penobscot, Washington, and Waldo are already facing double-digit tax increases or exhausting their reserves just to keep these essential facilities functioning.

The Maine Legislature is currently considering HP 1507, which would finally increase the County Jail Operations Fund to \$28.3 million and provide for a sustainable 4% annual growth. I urge our representatives to support this bill. It is time for the state to be an equal partner in public safety and provide the property tax relief Maine families desperately need.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Town], Maine