

To the Editor,

Maine's property taxpayers are being forced to subsidize a state responsibility, and the breaking point has arrived. For years, the state has ignored its commitment to fund **20% of county jail operating costs**, allowing its contribution to shrivel to a meager 14%. This isn't just a budget oversight; it is a systemic betrayal of local homeowners.

When the Legislature passes mandates and criminal justice policies without the promised funding, the bill doesn't disappear—it is simply rerouted to our property tax bills. This "legislating by mandate" has fueled a **27% spike in property taxes** since 2019, hit our seniors on fixed incomes the hardest, and left municipal officials with the impossible task of balancing local services against skyrocketing county assessments.

The solution is sitting on the table. The **Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee** has recommended a vital **\$8 million increase** in the supplemental budget to stabilize our jails. This is not a request for a handout; it is a demand for the state to pay its fair share of a system it governs.

We cannot continue to treat the equity in Maine homes as a rainy-day fund for state obligations. I call on the Appropriations Committee and the full Legislature to honor the 20% funding commitment. Respect the taxpayers, follow through on your promises, and stop shifting the cost of state policy onto the backs of local communities.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Town/Title]