



THE CITY OF AUGUSTA

DAVID M. ROLLINS, MAYOR

CITY COUNCIL

JEFFREY M. BILODEAU DALE McCORMICK
ANNA D. BLODGETT CECIL E. MUNSON
LINDA J. CONTI PATRICK E. PARADIS
DAREK M. GRANT

WILLIAM R. BRIDGEO
CITY MANAGER

TESTIMONY ON LD 186, An Act to Reverse Jail Consolidation

Senator Rosen, Representative Fowle and distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Cecil Munson, Senior At Large City Councilor for the City of Augusta. On behalf of the Mayor, the City Council and the citizens of the City, we are opposed to the passage of LD 186.

If this legislation passes as written, the City of Augusta will be required to pay an increased County tax of approximately \$360,000 annually subject to future budget adjustments by the County. This tax will directly impact the property taxes in the City in a negative manner. At this point in order for the City to absorb this increase in County tax and not pass the increased costs to property tax payers would require significant public safety and other program cuts. Given increased pressure to deal with drug enforcement and drug related crimes, we would be taking a step backwards by cutting into our public safety programs. As a matter of fact, our Council goals for this year included exploration of ways to increase our public safety staff to deal with drug gangs and related drug crimes.

The Kennebec County Correctional Facility is uniquely situated near the Riverview Psychiatric Facility and as such is called upon to deal with psychiatric patients who are also charged with crimes pending before the Courts. As inmates are boarded out to other jails for various reasons the costs go up and those costs will certainly be passed along to the municipalities by County tax levies. We have learned that the psychiatric facility at Warren is full with beds in demand. This puts added pressure on the County jails.

It makes sense to us that corrections is a State issue and the State should be taking the lead in oversight and the funding of all jails in the State in order to have some uniformity in the budgetary process rather than leaving it to the Counties and municipalities to fend for themselves.

I would be happy to answer your questions.