

To: LPC
Fr: Rebecca Graham
Re: County Assessment & Public Safety Working Group Supplemental Information
Date: October 22, 2024

The public safety working group briefly touched upon the aspects of county assessment and public safety costs. County assessments mirror municipal assessment in that the communities that contribute the most are those with higher property values but with much less transparency. There is little understanding of what services those contributions support.

To help explain what the key drivers for county assessment spending are, I have included the latest [spreadsheet](#), which serves as a snapshot of the jail population numbers in each county with a breakdown of the numbers of individuals who are housed in these facilities that cannot meet the risk assessment necessary to release them back into the public. Also included are the numbers of those who are not in the facility but on a pretrial detention status and able to be outside the facility, albeit with a monitoring factor typically involved.

The biggest pressure is the flat funding of the state portion of [county jail operations](#), and legislative control over the only policing agency that is mandated to provide services to all municipalities ranging from the provision of state intelligence and information systems to special technical services, high-risk response and evidence collection.

The sheriffs continually work with judges and prosecutors on triaging the situation of overcrowding in facilities that are overwhelmed with residents for a multitude of reasons. The majority of the pressures are beyond the control of the facility or the taxpayers who are contributing to the costs of this management. Overwhelmingly, the residents are awaiting trial, and with the two facilities shown with average populations beyond their rated capacity housing individuals for significant offenses, DHHS committals of mentally ill individuals who are too dangerous to be housed in an unsecure facility or released awaiting space in state hospitals, and individuals who are being held for violations of conditions of release from a state facility who are instead serving the rest of their time, or awaiting adjudication for that violation in a county facility. See recent draft [comments](#) on [rulemaking](#) that effect this.

Additionally, I have included the two sections of law that define responsibility for policing services to [unorganized communities](#), and [organized communities](#), along with the section that allows a community to [contract](#) for additional services with the county if they choose.

Regarding the use of county services for the administration of general assistance programming, this is already enabled and in use in Cumberland County. Two factors in adopting those services are community willingness to delegate those services, and county capacity to stand up a program and adequately service their contracted communities. This is not possible in all counties.

I hope this additional information will be helpful in narrowing the discussion towards potential solutions at Wednesday's meeting.