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COST PER PRISONER IN THE STATE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM

This topic was first brought to the attention of the Government Oversight Committee (GOC) in February 2011 when the Committee was considering ideas for new projects for OPEGA's annual workplan. The concern was raised that Maine's costs per prisoner were being reported as the 7th highest in the nation. Committee members noted that this concern had also been raised in the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety and that, although the Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) had provided some information to the Committee over the years, many questions lingered for legislators.

On March 4, 2011 GOC members voted unanimously to direct OPEGA to begin preliminary work on this topic. At the Committee's May 13, 2011 meeting OPEGA presented the results of preliminary research and suggested several questions that might be pursued to provide the Legislature with additional detailed data and analysis of MDOC's costs. Following discussion, the GOC voted to add another question to those suggested by OPEGA.

The scope questions finally approved by the GOC include:

1. What portion of MDOC centralized administrative costs are related to managing inmates in the State correctional system (including upper management, IT and DAFS Service Center Support)?
2. What is the cost per prisoner for State inmates? What are the primary categories of costs associated with State inmates (adult and juvenile)? What are the trends in those costs, and the cost per inmate, over time?
3. What are the primary drivers of high cost or increasing cost categories? What efforts has MDOC made to contain those costs? What are the outcomes of their efforts, and what barriers or challenges have they encountered?
4. How do costs and cost per inmate compare among State correctional facilities? What are the reasons for any significant variations?
5. How do Maine's costs compare to other states with similar demographics and corrections structures? What are the reasons for any significant variances?

This project is expected to be completed in early 2012.