

Dukes County Sheriff's Office serves approximately 20,000 year round residents who call Martha's Vineyard their home. This year round population consist mainly of middle to lower income families, who service a summer population of over 200,000. It is imperative to convey the uniqueness of our agency's work, in an isolated geographic location, accessible only by air or water; supporting regionally over 65 public agencies through the only Public Safety Access Point, and providing a regional Jail and Lockup for 8 law enforcement agencies. Regardless of seasonal fluctuations in arrests and inmate counts, or emergency call volume; we must maintain minimum staff to cover a 24 hours a day / 7 days a week operation.

The recruitment and retention of qualified personnel continues to be a challenge due to the cost of living about 25% higher than the rest of the Commonwealth, based on the cost of living data derived from the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER). Despite the unique nature of our operation, State funding formula continues to rely on the inmate to staff ratio at the House of Correction; creating a false image of our budgetary needs. In fact, the Dukes County Sheriff's Office was called an outlier in the original PCG report, yet it was later included in the report's conclusions and recommendations. In its current form, the formula continues to affect our agency adversely by ignoring the actual staff assignments beyond the House of Correction.

At minimum, if the formula continues to be used; we would request you assist the Dukes County Sheriff's Office in having A&F and the Legislature consider extending beyond the daily average House of Correction population, to include approximately 800 jail/lockup and pre-trial population, held at the same facility and served by the same deputies. Such an approach may yield a more equitable outcome in demonstrating the under-funding of the Dukes County Sheriff's Office more clearly, and its consequent inclusion in the group of Sheriff's Offices receiving a larger annual increase. Ideally, the formula should be discounted altogether for Dukes County, as it does not address the uniqueness of our statutory public service obligations.

Another key point to take away is that the all-inclusive employee count bundles custodial, non-custodial and regional / field service personnel under the same Direct Appropriation. In addition to operating the regional House of Correction, Jail and Lockup; we also provide Regional Emergency Communication Center (E911 service), and operate Civil Process and Community Outreach divisions. An attempt to relate the sentenced inmate population at the House of Correction to the entire Direct Appropriation level is misleading and creates a false fiscal image. The Care and Custody Operational Spending addresses this faulty statistic so some extent; however, since the same custodial personnel serve both House of Correction and Jail and Lockup, the true cost per inmate, which is much lower, is not captured.

Justice involved individuals, their families and public safety community, including courts and legal professionals, rely on the continued local access to our regionally provided services. Therefore, it would be difficult to draw comparisons between other mainland agencies or Island-based agencies that do not offer the full suite of services. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our agency has maintained 365/24/7 operations to support Martha's Vineyard and Elizabeth Islands; however, FY2020 statistics are outliers due to the suppressed number of arrests and shutdown of court operations.