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STATE OF MAINE RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION FUND PROJECT
DEMOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Document: *State of Maine Rural Health Transformation Program – Project Narrative*

Section: *Rural Health Needs and Target Population (Pages 2–8)*

Purpose of the Presentation:

To display key findings from pages 2 through 8 of Maine's *Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Project Narrative*. These pages define the state's **rural health landscape**, **target populations**, and the **data-driven justification** for the state's proposed transformation initiatives.

The summary provides a sobering overview of Maine's rural demographics, health disparities, access challenges, and the financial state of rural healthcare facilities.

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MAINE'S RURAL PROFILE

- *As our population ages, our healthcare system has experienced a growing demand for services, increase in complex conditions, and shortages of critical healthcare workers.*
- *In the past 25 years, global forces have battered Maine's heritage industries of forestry, fishing, and farming, which are the lifeblood of our state's economy. These changes have taken millions of dollars out of our rural areas. As jobs are lost, communities have been disrupted, contributing to substance use disorders and behavioral health needs.*
- *Residents of fully rural counties experience higher rates of chronic disease, oral and behavioral health challenges, and adverse maternal and infant outcomes.*
- *Rural residents also face significant challenges in accessing care due to provider shortages and limited hospital capacity.*
- *In addition to provider shortages, rural Maine residents face challenges in accessing care both in person and virtually.*

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MAINE'S RURAL HOSPITALS

Fully Rural Counties

CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITALS (CAH)

Bridgton Hospital
Rumford Hospital
Houlton Regional Hospital
MaineHealth Lincoln Hospital
MaineHealth Stephens Hospital
Northern Light Blue Hill Hospital
Northern Light C.A. Dean Hospital
Northern Light Mayo Hospital
Northern Light Sebasticook Valley Hospital
Northern Maine Medical Center
Redington-Fairview General Hospital
2 Washington County Hospitals

PPS HOSPITALS

Cary Medical Center
MaineGeneral Medical Center

Partially Rural Counties

CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITALS (CAH)

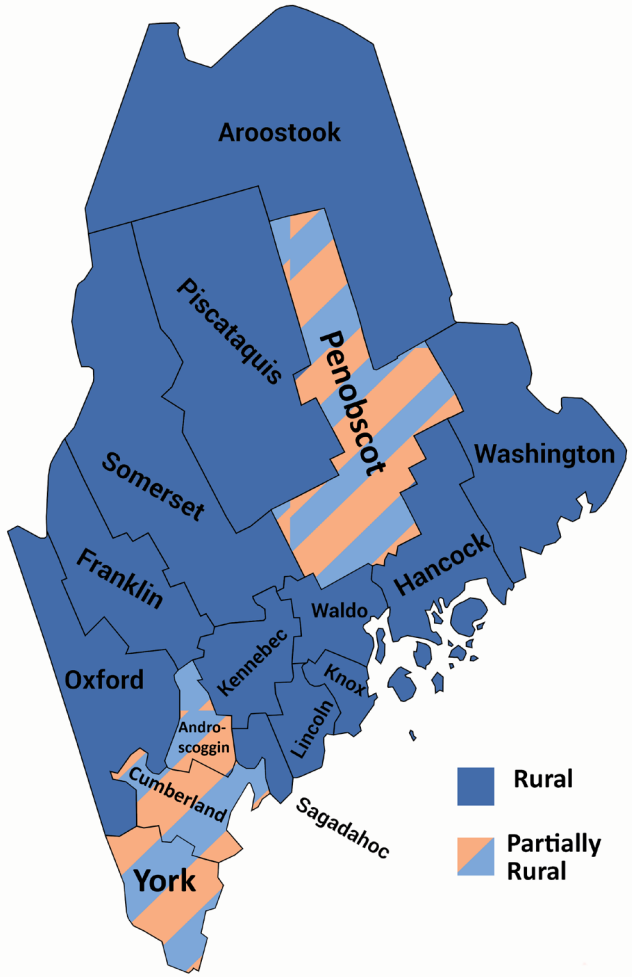
Millinocket Regional Hospital
Penobscot Valley Hospital

PPS HOSPITALS

Central Maine Medical Center
MaineHealth Franklin Hospital
MaineHealth Maine Medical Center
MaineHealth Mid Coast Hospital
Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center
Northern Light Mercy Hospital
St. Joseph Hospital
St. Mary's Hospital

SPECIALTY HOSPITALS

MaineHealth Behavioral Health
Northern Light Acadia Hospital
New England Rehabilitation Hospital



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1. Maine's Rural Profile

Maine is the oldest state in the U.S and one of the most rural.

- 51% of Maine residents (≈690,000) live in rural areas;
- Twelve of sixteen counties are "fully rural," and the other 4 are "partially rural.";
- Median age is 45; Median rural age is over 50;
- The population over age 65 is projected to rise 16% by 2030.

DEMOGRAPHICS

2. Demographics and Economic Conditions

Rural counties face lower income and employment rates.

- The median rural household income is $68,000 (13% below the national average);
- 1/3 rural residents are on Medicare (vs. 1/4);
- Only 37% of working age adults are employed (vs. 44%).

3. Chronic and Behavioral Health Challenges

Rural Mainers suffer higher rates of chronic illness.

- Rural residents nationally have higher rates of heart disease (9% v. 7%) and diabetes (36% v. 32%);
- Age adjusted mortality is 856 per 100K rural (v. 751);
- Rates of depression (25% v. 21%); suicide per 100K (21 v. 14); drug-related deaths per 100K (48 v 32).

Population Factoid:

Portland is the only Maine municipality in the top 1,000 nationwide; its #778.

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HEALTH

4. Maternal and Infant Health Disparities

- Low birth weight exceeds 10% in multiple rural counties, and infant mortality reaches 9 per 1,000 live births in some areas.
- Birthing unit closures (11 of 28 since 2014) have increased travel distances for pregnant women to an average of 27 miles and up to four hours for complex deliveries.

5. Access and Infrastructure Gaps

- Eight fully rural counties have no general hospital;
- 983 fully rural residents per primary care physician (39% higher than partially rural counties);
- 217 fully rural residents per BH provider (35% higher).

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6. Financial Instability of Rural Facilities

- 83% percent of Maine's rural hospitals fall below the S&P financial threshold for adequate cash reserves;
- 43% report financially vulnerable operating margins; 57% have vulnerable total margins;
- 74% below target for age of plant;
- **One-fourth of rural hospitals failed all four S&P operating benchmarks**;
- From 2017–2023 commercial inpatient days declined by 51% for rural hospitals;
- Commercial outpatient visits declined by 22%.

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