

MAINE'S HOSPITAL WORKFORCE: 2026 CURRENT STATUS AND FEDERAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Executive Summary

Maine hospitals have made progress stabilizing the healthcare workforce following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, structural workforce shortages, an aging workforce, and constrained training pipelines continue to pose significant risks to healthcare access, particularly in rural communities.

Key Takeaways

Reported vacancies declined significantly, from 4,227 in 2025 to 2,512 in 2026 (↓ 40%).

Reliance on contract/traveler staff dropped by 48%, improving workforce stability and reducing costs.

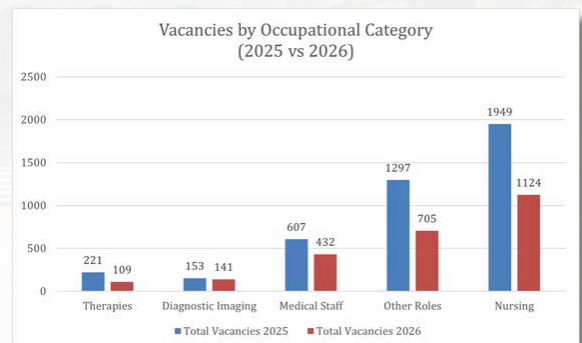
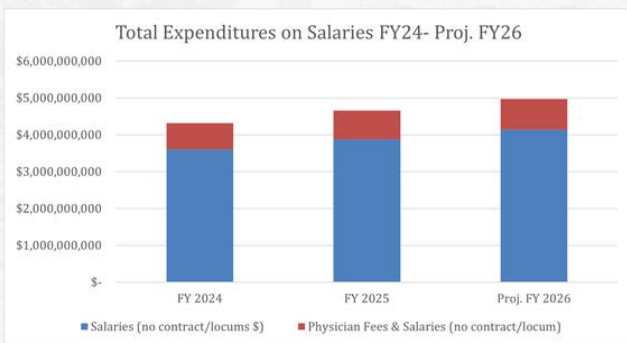
Hospitals increased wages by ~7%, reflecting continued competition for workers.

The statewide vacancy rate remains elevated at 14.9%, indicating ongoing workforce strain.

Workforce aging is accelerating, with 6,322 hospital employees age 55+ (↑ 13% year-over-year).

Hospitals invested nearly \$13 million in workforce development in FY2025, yet demand continues to exceed supply.

Importantly, hospitals report that the decline in vacancies reflects both real improvements in workforce stability and changes in hiring and budgeting practices. Many organizations have implemented more rigorous internal review processes before posting positions, reduced duplicate job postings, and, in some cases, delayed or eliminated roles due to financial pressures.

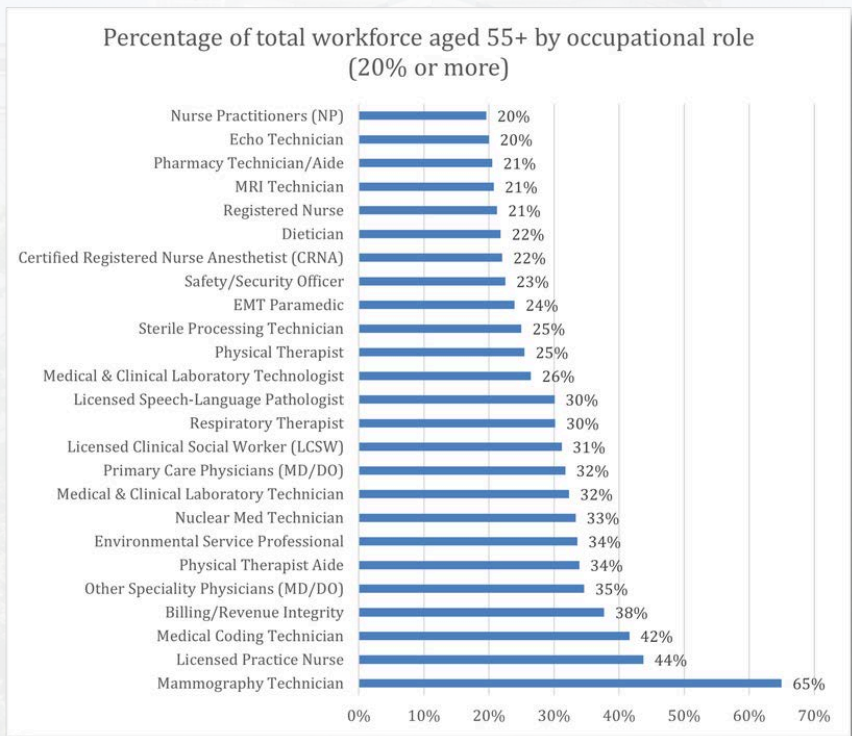
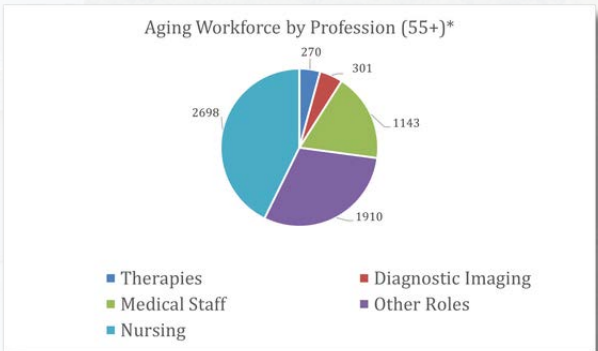
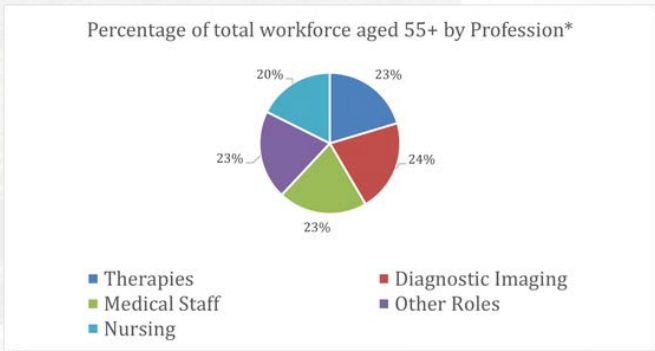


Ongoing Workforce Challenges:

Aging Workforce Threatens Future Access

Maine has one of the oldest populations in the nation—and its healthcare workforce reflects that reality.

- Over 20% of the workforce in most professions is age 55+
- More than 1,100 physicians and advanced practice providers are nearing retirement

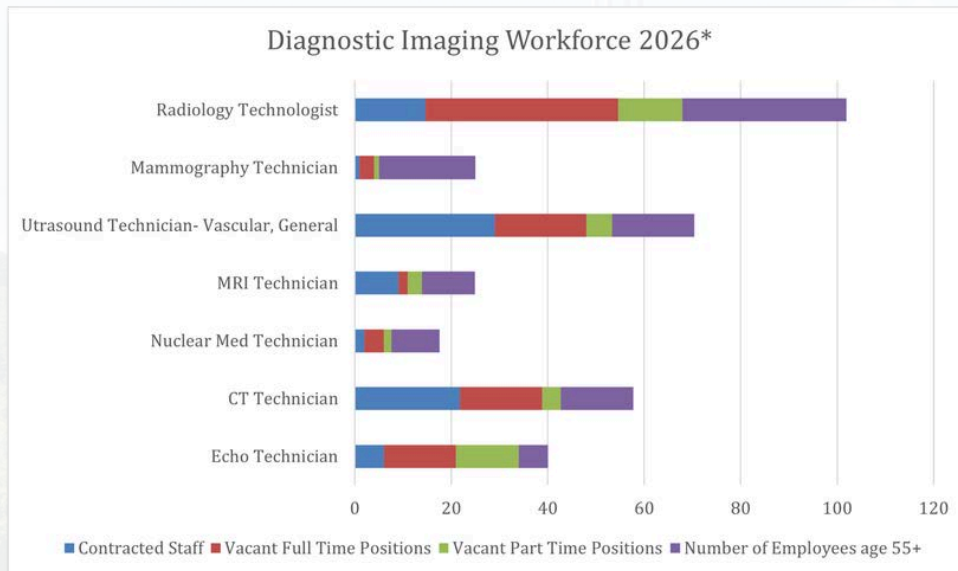


Ongoing Workforce Challenges:

Persistent Shortages in Critical Specialties

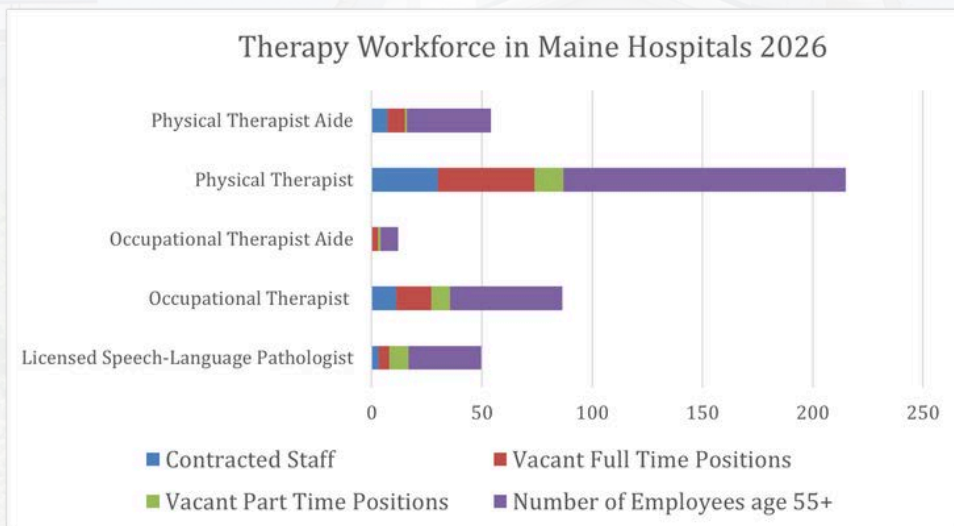
Diagnostic Imaging (Emerging Risk Area)

- Vacancy rates as high as 38.7% (echo technicians)



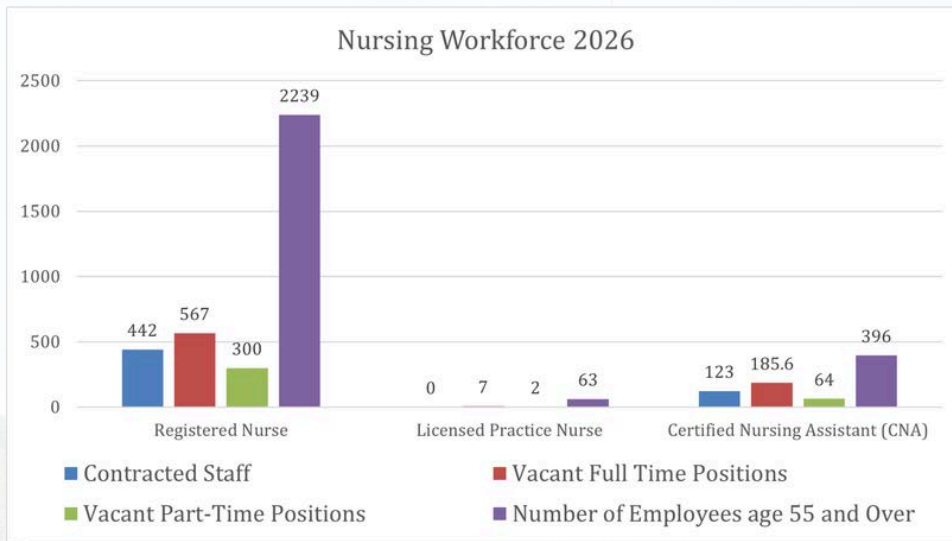
Therapy Workforce

- Vacancy rates remain elevated ($\approx 9-20\%$) despite improvements



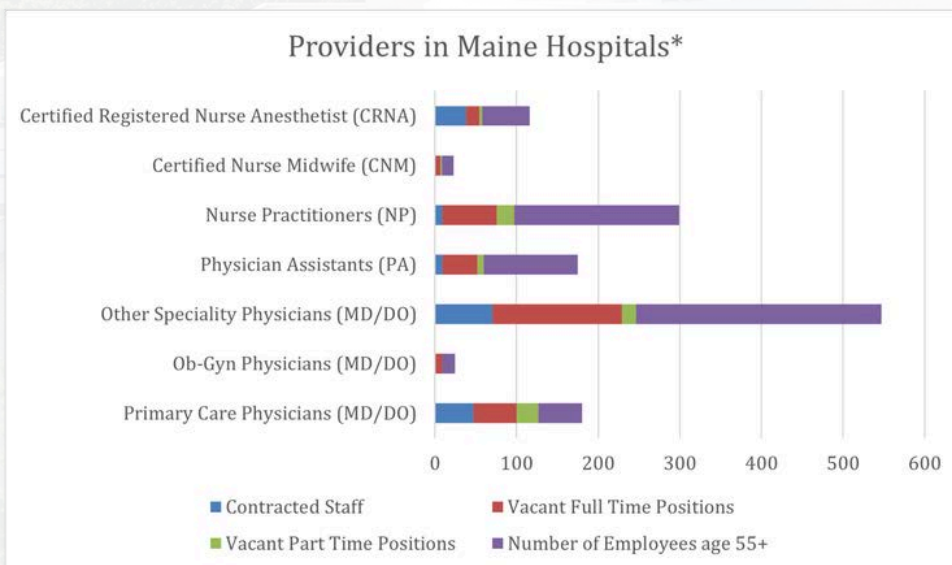
Nursing

- Registered nurse vacancies declined 35%, but still represent the largest shortage category



Physicians and Providers

- 432 provider vacancies statewide, with persistent shortages in rural and specialty care



Conclusion

Persistent shortages, combined with a rapidly aging workforce, pose significant long-term risks to healthcare access and system sustainability.

Sustained investment in workforce development, education, and rural healthcare infrastructure will be essential to ensuring Maine's healthcare system can meet the needs of its residents in the years ahead.