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To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: David J. Daigler, President Maine Community College System
RE: *Resolve, Directing the Maine Community College System To Evaluate the Need To Expand Workforce Training Options in Waldo County*
Date: December 1, 2021

INTRODUCTION

On June 14, 2021, Governor Mills signed LD 814, *Resolve, Directing the Maine Community College System To Evaluate the Need To Expand Workforce Training Options in Waldo County*. This Resolve required MCCS, using existing resources, to determine education and training needs in Waldo County and to ascertain how the Maine Community College System could meet those needs and what resources were available or needed.

This report offers an analysis of Waldo County as well as recommendations for future education and training opportunities for the residents of Waldo County. MCCS welcomes this opportunity and believes there is a need for a strengthened focus on providing accessible opportunities for Waldo County residents.

Recommendations:

- Continue to build on rejuvenated partnership with Waldo County Technical Center
- Identify opportunities to use existing state and federal resources to provide short-term training in Waldo County
- Explore opportunities with Waldo County General Hospital for an RN program
- Continue to build on solid existing relationships with Waldo County businesses
- Partner with Waldo County businesses using MCCS' Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce to offer incumbent worker training.
- Recruit in Waldo County for Kennebec Valley Community College's expanding Journey Electrician Program

BACKGROUND

The Maine Community College System (MCCS) is comprised of seven colleges with nine campuses and multiple satellite locations. We are located within 25 miles of 92% of Maine's population. Our total enrollment is approximately 15,000 students in degree-seeking programs and 6,300 in short-term training. Our tuition and fees cost approximately \$3,700 a year. For nearly half of all degree-seeking students, grant aid covers the full cost of tuition and fees. Three quarters of first-time full-time students receive grant aid and 67% of all undergraduates receive some form of grant aid. This combined with the

fact that our colleges have the lowest per-credit tuition in New England makes us the most affordable way for Maine residents to get the education and training they need for the careers they want.

According to the April 2020 U.S. Census, Waldo County is home to approximately 39,600 Maine residents, of which 18.2% are under 18 years of age and 23.3% are over the age of 65. Waldo County contains 3.0 % of Maine’s overall population. The five largest cities and towns are Belfast, Lincolnville, Unity, Winterport and Searsport¹.

Currently, there are 232 students from Waldo County enrolled at a Maine community college. This is 1.4% of our student body. During the past three years, 511 Waldo County residents attended Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) and 477 Waldo County residents attended KVCC — the two most geographically proximate colleges to Waldo County.

However, despite the geographic reach of the MCCS colleges, we know that there are some locations in the state where distance from a campus or satellite location is a real or perceived barrier to attendance. Parts of Waldo County are approximately an hour from either EMCC or KVCC. That distance can be a deterrent to potential students or trainees, especially those caring for family or working in their communities. With adequate resources, both human and financial, and with willing partners, MCCS is committed to increasing our reach to more rural locations in Maine, including Waldo County.

MCCS utilizes a software tool that allows us to analyze demographics and the employment market in real time. This allows us to put our limited training dollars to use in the industries not only where employees are needed but that also offer opportunities for career growth if training is utilized. Maine Quality Center staff ran a JobsEQ report for Waldo County in October 2021. This report provides us with actionable data to better structure our training to meet specific needs. The JobsEQ report shows Waldo County lagging behind the rest of Maine and the nation in a few key indicators, but overall, the county is not that different than the state and country as a whole

Indicator	Waldo	Maine	USA
Labor Force Participation Rate (Civilians age 16+)	60.7%	62.9%	63.2%
Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate (civilians aged 25-54)	82.3%	83.4%	82.1%
Per Capita Income	\$29,674	\$32,637	\$34,103
Mean Commute Time	27.4%	24.2%	26.9%
Poverty Level	14%	12%	13%
Disconnected Youth ²	37	1,293	423,273
No High School Diploma	6.6%	5.8%	10.9%
High School Graduate	33%	31%	26%
Some College, No Degree	21%	20%	21%
Associate's Degree	10%	11%	9%
Bachelor's Degree	20%	21%	21%
Postgraduate Degree	9%	11%	12%

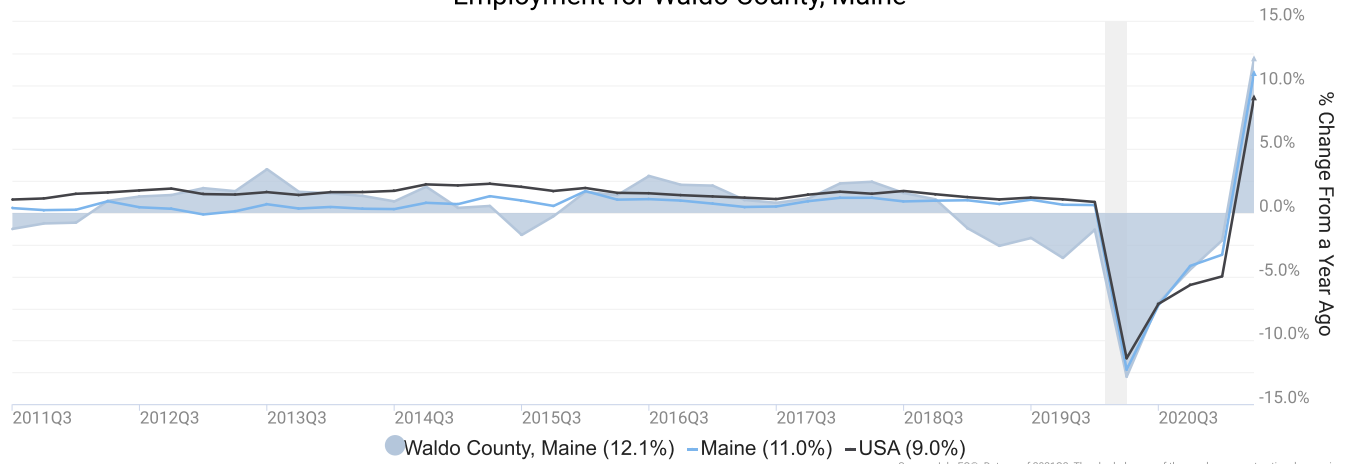
¹ Belfast is approximately a 50-minute drive from both EMCC and KVCC. Winterport is 23-minute drive from EMCC and an hour from KVCC. Unity is 20 minutes from KVCC and 45 minutes from EMCC. Searsport is 45 minutes from EMCC and 1 hour from KVCC. Lincolnville is just over an hour from both KVCC and EMCC.

² Youth ages 16-19 who are not in school, not high school graduates and are either unemployed or not in the labor force

Employment Trends

As of 2021 Q2, total employment for Waldo County, Maine was 12,851 (based on a four-quarter moving average). Over the year ending 2021 Q2, employment increased 12.1% in the region.

Employment for Waldo County, Maine

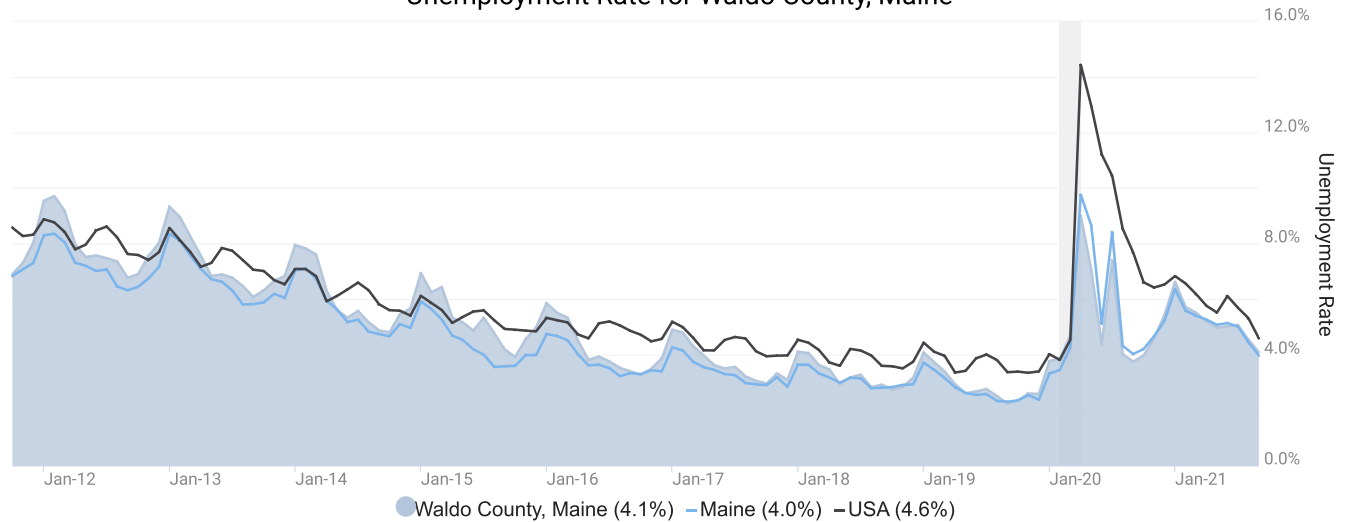


Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2021Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2021Q2. Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2021Q2. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate for Waldo County, Maine was 4.1% as of September 2021. The regional unemployment rate was lower than the national rate of 4.6%. One year earlier, in September 2020, the unemployment rate in Waldo County, Maine was 3.7%.

Unemployment Rate for Waldo County, Maine

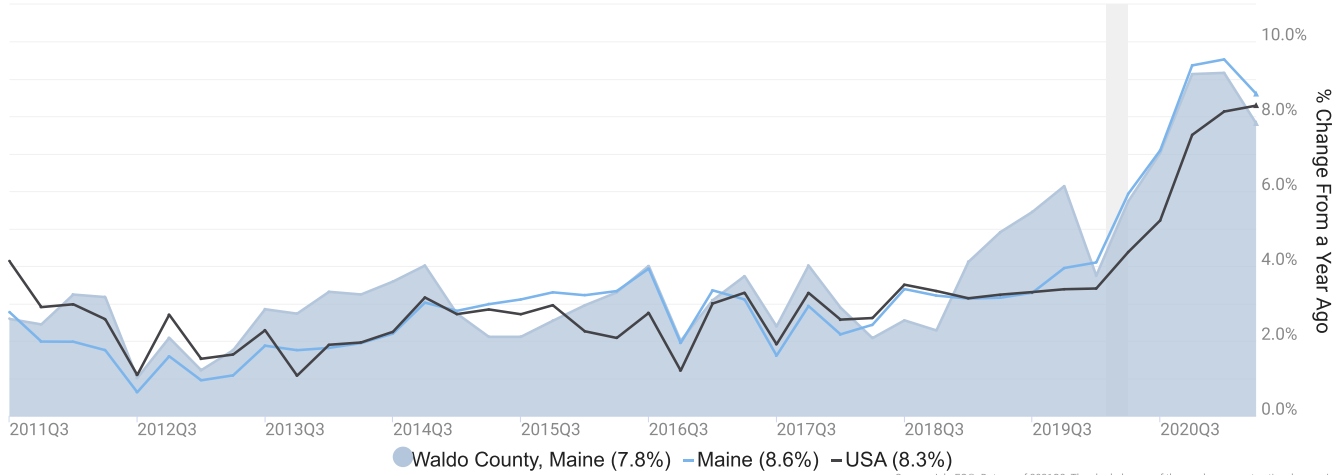


Unemployment rate data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated through September 2021. Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of Sep 2021. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

Wage Trends

The average worker in Waldo County, Maine earned annual wages of \$44,126 as of 2021 Q2. Average annual wages per worker increased 7.8% in the region over the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were \$64,141 in the nation as of 2021 Q2.

Average Annual Wages for Waldo County, Maine

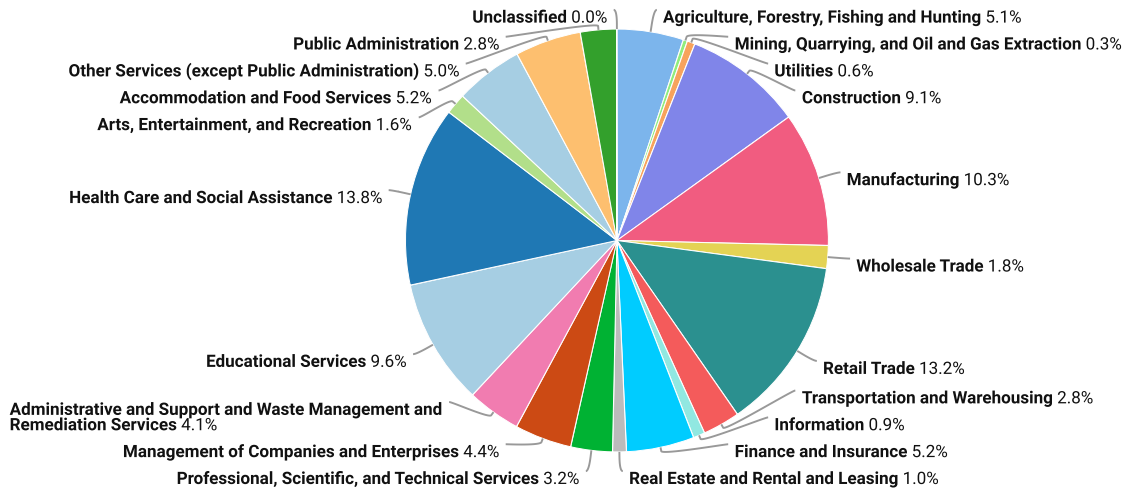


Annual average wages per worker data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2021Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2021Q2. Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2021Q2. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

Industry Snapshot from JobsEQ

The largest sector in Waldo County, Maine is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 1,769 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (1,701 workers) and Manufacturing (1,323). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (LQ = 3.61), Management of Companies and Enterprises (2.86), and Construction (1.53).

Total Workers for Waldo County, Maine by Industry



Source: JobsEQ®, Data as of 2021Q2

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2021Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2021Q2.

Sectors in Waldo County with the highest average wages per worker are Finance and Insurance (\$73,846), Utilities (\$73,487), and Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$71,891). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are Management of Companies and Enterprises (+532 jobs), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (+184), and Manufacturing (+168).

Over the next year, employment in Waldo County is projected to contract by 42 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance with a +0.6% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+11 jobs), Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (+3), and Accommodation and Food Services (+1).

The above data from the Jobs EQ report, combined MCCS academic offerings and short-term training opportunities, show us that MCCS could make the biggest impact in Waldo County by focusing on preparing residents for jobs in healthcare, construction, and manufacturing.

CURRENT CHALLENGES:

MCCS interest in expanding both short-term and academic degree programs to more people, places and industries is largely constrained by resources. The legislature approved a 3% increase in our base budget for FY 2022 and FY 2023. This increase will cover less than two-thirds of our increased costs over the biennium.

Of the six categories of focus mentioned in this Resolve, four require substantial coursework for certification and licensure as well as clinical and/or apprenticeship hours. Due to this requirement, they are not all conducive to the one-time funds offered to MCCC through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan. These licensure-based programs require full-time faculty with very specific knowledge. Like most of the country, MCCC has found it increasingly difficult to recruit high-quality faculty with our current wage offerings. Our wages are set through collective bargaining and the amount relies heavily on our state appropriation. Without increased appropriations, we will not be able to provide the education residents and businesses are asking us to provide.

The Education Committee of the 130th First Session recommended an additional ongoing appropriation of \$2.5 million to MCCC in order to double our nursing programs as well as increase other licensure-based programs. This funding was not included in the budget passed on adjournment, however there is legislation pending this session that proposes providing MCCC with \$2.5 million in ongoing funding for the expansion of MCCC's nursing program.

There are other factors in addition to financial and human resources that are limiting our progress. The first and most obvious is the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic not only impacts the health of our students, their families, potential partners, and staff, but also the capacity of those who may seek training for themselves or their employees. Across the country, enrollment in community colleges has been severely impacted by the pandemic and Maine is no different. Jobs are seemingly plentiful, but many, especially caregivers, cannot find the supports they need to work or attend school. Affordable childcare, transportation costs and lack of housing are very real issues that need to be addressed before the economy can rebound across all income levels. In fact, according to JobsEQ, the cost of living in Waldo County is 8% higher than the national average.

On the other hand, a labor market that is offering higher-than-normal wages and signing bonuses for entry level jobs make the short-term opportunity cost for taking the time to attend school higher than it has been in the past and suppresses educational aspirations.

One additional note, Eastern Maine Community College and Waldo County Technical Center are both in the process of leadership transitions. This affords both a near-term challenge and an opportunity going forward.

CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES:

This fall, MCCC unveiled the **Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce**, a virtual center that will direct a historic \$60 million investment in short-term workforce training backed by private and public funds. Over four years, the Center will serve more than 24,000 Mainers.

The Center will pull together varied current workforce training efforts into a single, logical and accessible system that weaves together opportunities for both short-term training and longer-term degree/certification attainment. It will also provide clear, affordable, educational pathways to Maine adults no matter where they are on the job skill development continuum.

The Center will also be a new and powerful resource for members of the business community. The Center is designed to serve as the training division for Maine's small- to medium-sized employers who lack the resources to sustain in-house training departments. It will focus on solving today's most

pressing workforce challenges: the mismatch between worker skills and employer needs; the low post-secondary education attainment rate; the realities of an aging, shrinking workforce; and the need to make training and education more accessible at the workplace, online, and within our communities.

The Alford Center will have navigators dedicated specifically to Waldo County to work with local businesses to train new hires and incumbent workers, and then move those workers who are interested onto a path to attain an Associate degree.

MCCS workforce training staff have already had two meetings with the new director of the Waldo County Tech Center and his staff. A site visit is planned for mid-December where we will begin to assess how we may best offer college-level courses or workforce training at WCTC. WCTC is willing to partner with MCCS and we believe that our reinvigorated partnership will benefit WCTC, MCCS and Waldo County.

The Resolve asked us to specifically look at six trades. Below you will find the information we have available on those trades. As we noted earlier in this report, we feel that healthcare, construction and manufacturing are the areas we can have the most impact.

- 1) **Nursing or other medical trades:** There are many initiatives planned or ongoing to increase healthcare training in and around Waldo County. The entry level to most health care positions is Certified Nursing Assistant. MCCS has restarted our conversations with WCTC about working collaboratively to provide CNA training at WCTC. MCCS would pay for the training and supplies. WCTC and MCCS will work together to find instructors and WCTC will provide the space. EMCC is currently working on a nursing cohort with Pen Bay, which will likely appeal to Waldo County residents and is willing to explore a partnership with Waldo County General Hospital if the nursing expansion is funded during the 130th Second Session. In fact, six of the 40 nursing students currently enrolled at EMCC are from Waldo County. Alford Center staff are in active discussions with other health care providers who work in Waldo County about the potential to upskill their employees and train new hires.
- 2) **Composites manufacturing:** MCCS had a program in composites at Southern Maine Community College (SMCC,) however, that program was moved to the University of Southern Maine (USM.) We plan to explore the work currently going on in composites at WCTC and we will analyze practical use for boat industry and see if the training is warranted.
- 3) **Carpentry:** Preliminary discussions are underway about potential partnerships at WCTC. KVCC is currently the only college offering a carpentry and building science certificate.
- 4) **Journey Electrician:** MCCS plans to actively recruit in Waldo County for our newly expanded Journey Electrician program at KVCC.
- 5) **Millwright trades:** EMCC offers a fine woodworking and cabinet making program that is available as both an Associate degree and a certificate.
- 6) **Ventilation, air conditioning, refrigeration, plumbing and heating:** These programs are offered at both EMCC and KVCC. MCCS will begin a needs assessment with WCTC to determine if a partnership is feasible.

CONCLUSION:

MCCS was designed to serve the entire state. With appropriate resources and with willing partners in business and education, we should be able to increase our reach into Waldo County and help increase the aspirations of residents and the productivity of businesses. The new and unparalleled opportunities soon to be afforded by the Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce will allow for more localized training options over the next few years. MCCS looks forward to continuing to seek out new opportunities in Waldo County in the years to come.