



MAINE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

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***Maine Development Foundation and Maine State Chamber release
“Maine’s Labor Shortage: New Mainers and Diversity”***

***Report explores importance of in-migration and diversity
in growing Maine’s workforce and economy***

AUGUSTA, ME, — The Maine State Chamber of Commerce (MSCC) and the Maine Development Foundation (MDF) released “*Maine’s Labor Shortage: New Mainers and Diversity*” at a press conference on Thursday, September 22, 2016. The report is a publication of the “*Making Maine Work*” workforce series released in 2014.

“An available and skilled workforce is a key factor in our economic success and a priority for our two organizations,” said Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. “We hear from employers across the state and throughout the economy about the difficulties they face in finding enough workers with the skills and education they require. Part of the solution is to help every Mainer participate in the workforce to his or her highest potential. But with our demographics, we also need to look beyond our borders to bolster our population, our workforce, and our economy. It is estimated that new immigrants and their children are expected to account for 83% of the growth in the U.S. workforce from 2000 to 2050. We need to be part of this equation.”

In 2014, “*Making Maine Work: Growing Maine’s Workforce*” outlined two broad strategies. The first focused on increasing workforce participation among Maine’s existing population, including disengaged youth, veterans, older workers, and people with disabilities. The other strategy focused on improving our net migration, a topic that is further explored in this current report.

Today, *Maine's Labor Shortage: New Mainers and Diversity* examines our current demographic challenges and the impact on our workforce and economy. With an aging and predominantly white population, Maine's workforce is projected to decline in the years ahead, as aging workers reach retirement and too few young workers are available to replace them. Improving our net migration and adding greater diversity to our population can bring more workers, skills, education, innovative spirit, entrepreneurial capacity, and global connections into Maine's economy.

"In the global struggle for skilled and educated workers, Maine has the dual challenge of an aging population that lacks the diversity that is a key driver of population growth," said MDF President and CEO Yellow Light Breen. "Many other areas with demographic challenges have put programs and initiatives in place to address them. This gives us a number of best practices to choose from, but also highlights the urgency to act. We need more people contributing to our economy to their maximum potential to move forward."

The report also highlights a number of existing programs in Maine and elsewhere, and offers recommendations in the areas of statewide consensus and leadership, integration and coordination of efforts, and evaluation of specific programs and policies, that can help maximize the contributions of new Mainers and make Maine a more attractive destination for the others we will need to attract.

Funding for the report was provided by the Maine Community Foundation. **The full document can be accessed online at <http://www.mainechamber.org/makingmainework.php>.**

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About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce...

As the state's most influential business advocate, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce works to ensure a business climate in which Maine State Chamber members, large and small, can compete successfully in the local, regional, national, and world marketplaces. As *The Voice of Maine Business*, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce proudly represents a network of 5,000 businesses of all sectors, sizes, and regions. It advocates on their behalf daily before the Legislature, state departments, and various levels of state government.

About the Maine Development Foundation...

The Maine Development Foundation (MDF) is a private, non-partisan membership organization that drives sustainable, long-term economic growth for the State of Maine. MDF's strategic focus is a productive workforce. We believe that a productive worker is one that is educated, healthy, innovative, and engaged in their community and the economy. MDF stimulates new ideas, develops leaders, and provides common ground for solving problems and advancing issues by empowering leaders; strengthening communities; and, guiding public policy with trusted economic research. Created in statute in 1978, MDF is a unique and trusted non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. MDF works statewide across all sectors.