



LINDA COAN

Hiring signs can be seen all around the greater Bangor area. Tradewinds on State Street in Veazie has a sign along the road.

# Maine launches program to get people back to work

## State to provide \$1,500 payments to help fill

BY CAITLIN ANDREWS  
BDN STAFF

AUGUSTA — Gov. Janet Mills' administration is trying out an incentive program to get people off unemployment and into jobs this summer, as employers seek to fill empty positions.

The "Back to Work" program will use \$10 million in federal coronavirus relief funds to provide one-time, \$1,500 payments to workers who start a new job by the end of June or \$1,000 if they do so by the end of July. The

job must pay under \$25 an hour and eligible people must be employed for eight weeks straight.

The payments could reach up to 7,500 people. They would first go to the employer, who would be expected to pass it on to their eligible workers.

The move comes as the state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate has hovered just below 5 percent in the last two months and as the summer tourism season approaches. Some states have pushed to end an extra \$300 in weekly unemployment benefits Congress provided for in the

American Rescue Plan Act, arguing the increased benefits were preventing people from coming back to work.

It is not clear how much payment is contributing to employment, but President Biden has not opposed those who signaled the extra payments in September. Mills, a Democrat, continued the payment an additional \$100 for those both self-employed and on traditional job. Full work  
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# Northern Light plans overhauls at 5 hospitals

BY DAVID MARINO JR.  
BDN STAFF

Northern Light Health is planning or working on overhauls at half of its 10 hospitals across the state, with recent announcements for new or updated facilities following a year during which the Brewer-based hospital system lost tens of millions of dollars.

The hospital system is in varying stages of updating Acadia Hospital in Bangor, its hospital in Blue Hill, Maine Coast Hospital in Ellsworth, C.A. Dean Hospital in Greenville and Mercy Hospital in Portland.

After more than a year of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, including treating patients as the virus surged in the winter of 2021 and opening mass vaccination sites in the spring, Northern Light is applying many of the lessons it learned during the pandemic to the building overhauls, including the need for patient privacy and expanded digital health care capabilities.

"Although it may have slowed things down by a few months, we're going to end up with a much better product," said Tim Doak, Northern Light's head of facilities, planning, design and construction.



An addition to Northern Light's Mercy Hospital is under construction on Monday. Personnel are working on the site.

Work at all the facilities except Acadia is pending a vote by Northern Light's board of directors expected in March 2022.

Construction would begin in

# Maine budget impasse drags on with Legislature

BY CAITLIN ANDREWS  
BDN STAFF

AUGUSTA — The Maine Legislature is scheduled to leave the State House this week and will not have a new two-year budget in hand until the end of the month at the earliest with the two parties far apart on key aspects of Gov. Janet Mills' \$8.8 billion proposal.

Budget discussions have been complicated this year. The Legislature brokered a supplemental budget over two long days in March. Then, weeks later, Democrats pushed through an initial two-year budget over Republican objections with a simple majority for the first time since 2005, stating a desire to avoid uncertainty around federal aid and

revenue projections.

Democrats and Republicans have made little progress on Mills' updated budget. Negotiators have been working on week-ends to hammer out some differences but have not discussed the budget publicly since June 1 as lawmakers sprinted through hundreds of bills in a marathon set of session days.

