



Joint Council for Economic Opportunity
of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Inc.

January 25, 2023

“Tight knit” doesn’t quite scratch the surface when describing the North Country. “Tight knit” doesn’t encompass the generations of farmers, contractors, and manufacturers that have raised their children together – it doesn’t encompass the hundreds of local men and women who volunteer with their local fire stations and EMS – it can’t describe the symbiotic relationship towns have with one another. Clinton and Franklin Counties together model the closeness of the North Country community. Indeed, both counties share small local chains, like Giuseppe’s pizza, which has locations in Plattsburgh, Keeseville, Dannemora and Malone, or Nuway Car Wash, with locations in Plattsburgh and Malone. Community Action Agencies, as well, recognize the sisterhood of the two counties by servicing both. JCEO, Friends of the North Country, and United Way of the Adirondack Region are just a few of the local nonprofits that work in both counties. JCEO alone has more than 20 locations throughout the region.

Notwithstanding the small urban center of the City of Plattsburgh, both counties also face the same challenges many rural communities face. In Clinton and Franklin Counties, the annual median income is \$60,285 and \$55,279, respectively – more than \$14,000 below state average of \$74,315. Poverty rates are also above the state average, with Clinton at 16.1% and Franklin at 18.4%. Low and stagnant wages, coupled with minimal walkability within the counties and very little public transportation, make the cost of fuel and transportation a heavy burden for these communities to bear.

At JCEO, we are seeing an increasing numbers of households looking for aid as they find they cannot bear the burden of the rising cost of food, fuel, and transportation. In 2022 we provided more than 14,000 rides to individuals in both counties who would have otherwise been unable to make it to medical appointments. We served almost 10,000 families in both counties, with food, clothing, toiletries, and other valuable resources.

To those of us who live and work here, it is clear both counties benefit from sharing a district. It would be irresponsible to carve them apart.

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