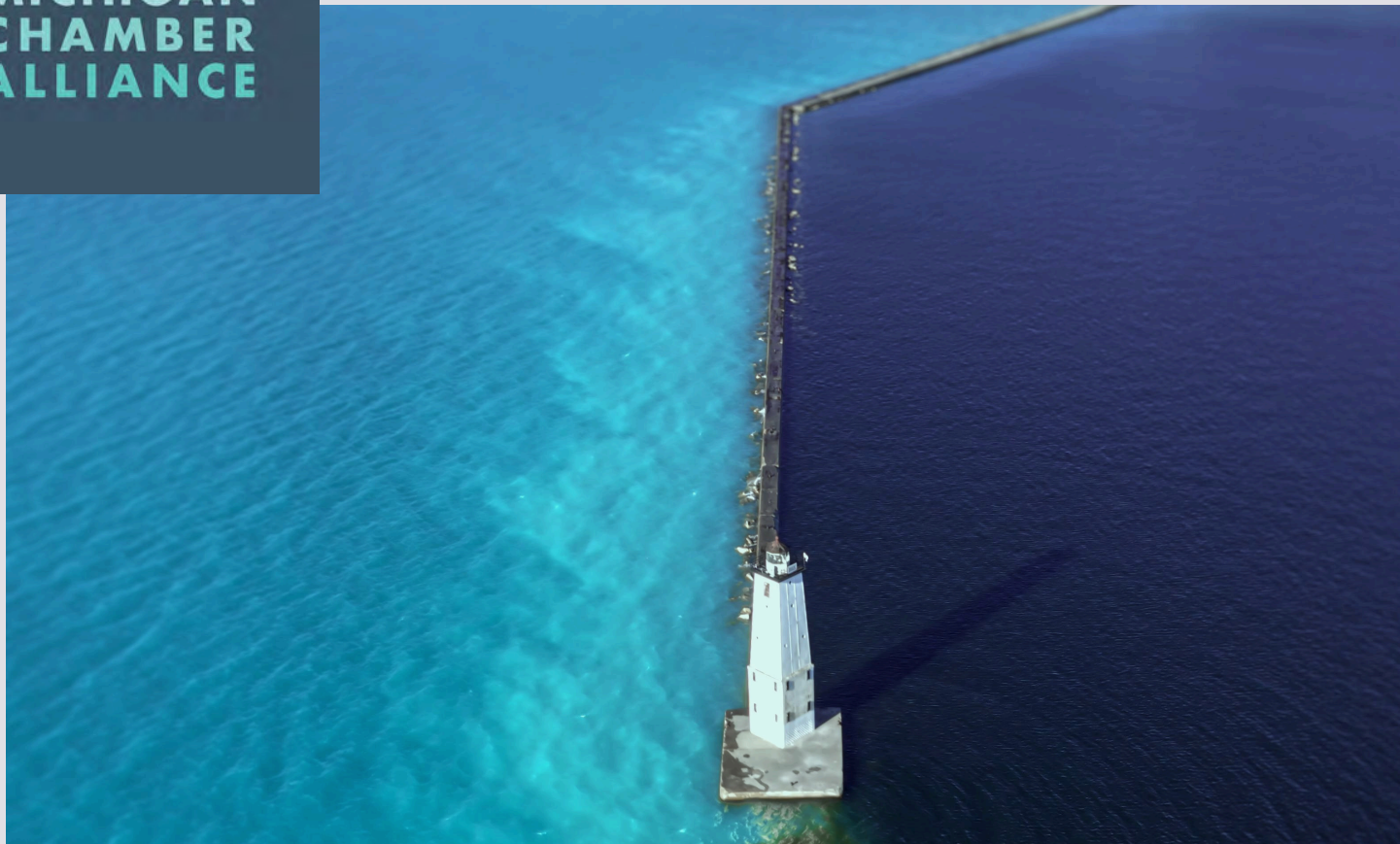


**N★RTHERN
MICHIGAN
CHAMBER
ALLIANCE**



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Elevating & advancing local business.

LEADING THE WAY THROUGH A CHANGING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

In 2025, the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance stepped forward as a trusted advocate for businesses and communities navigating a rapidly changing policy and economic landscape. From labor law updates and healthcare concerns to shifting trade policy and federal uncertainty, the Alliance focused on one clear goal: helping northern Michigan's business community move forward with confidence.

EARNED SICK TIME ACT



Watch former Director, Haley Bennett's, testimony via the Michigan Senate recording [here](#).

The first quarter was shaped by the implementation of the Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA). Anticipating the impact on small and mid-sized employers, the Alliance mobilized quickly to advocate for practical reforms and provide clear education across the region. Through a partnership with Rehmann, the Alliance hosted a public webinar that explained the key differences between HB 4002 and SB 15, outlined employer responsibilities, and offered guidance for compliance.

The Alliance testified before the Senate Regulatory Affairs Committee, calling for bipartisan collaboration and adjustments that balance worker protections with the realities facing employers.

TARIFFS & TRADE POLICY

As national trade policy continued to evolve, the Alliance expanded its role as a source of regional insight. A regional business survey revealed widespread concern over rising tariffs and supply chain instability, particularly among retail and manufacturing firms. Of the 214 businesses surveyed, a majority reported negative impacts, with many expecting financial strain and potential workforce reductions over the next year. The findings highlighted a clear message: stability helps businesses invest, hire, and grow. Employers described the challenge of planning for the future amid shifting policies and rising costs even when sourcing domestically.

Later in the year, the Alliance joined the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in signing a letter to the White House advocating for the continued importance of the U.S.–Canada–Mexico trade agreement. The Alliance's participation in this letter reflects how important cross-border trade is to northern Michigan's economy with the region's closest trading partner, Canada.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 52% expect a significant negative impact
- 44% foresee major revenue decline in the next 12 months
- 14% anticipate job cuts
- Only 1.4% expect growth

H.R.1

To help businesses navigate changing federal tax policy, the Alliance hosted a webinar in partnership with Rehmann focused on federal legislation H.R. 1, also known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," and Michigan's decision to decouple from portions of the law.

The webinar provided business owners and community leaders with an overview of expanded credits and incentives, new compliance requirements, key changes to depreciation, and the broader implications for strategic planning and investment decisions. The session also addressed how state-level decoupling could affect Michigan businesses differently than federal policy alone.



The webinar is available on the Traverse Connect YouTube channel [here](#).

Q1

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



Governor Whitmer, Northern Michigan Policy Conference



Lt. Gov. Gilchrist & Alliance Partners - UP200



House Floor Leader Bryan Posthumus - State of the State



Lt. Gov. Gilchrist, State of the State

Q2



Governor's Breakfast in Cadillac



Michigan Capitol Day



Mackinac Policy Conference

Q3



2025 Bully Pulpit Presenting Sponsor DTE with Alliance Partners.



National Recognition, Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives



Senators Damoose, Hoyenga & Bumstead - Budget Negotiations



Late night deliberations

Q4



Sen. Damoose with business leaders - Traverse Connect Annual Economic Summit



Alliance Partners & Acuitas



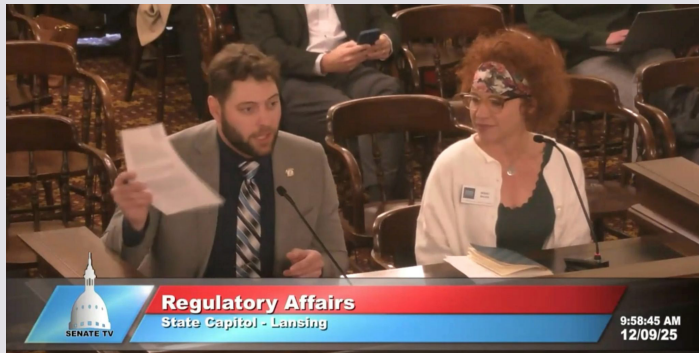
Sen. Singh Staff with Partners & Acuitas



Rep. Hoadley with Partners & Acuitas

POLICY PRIORITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: ADVANCING REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS



Through coordinated testimony and direct engagement with legislators throughout the year, the Alliance's economic development efforts focused on flexible and inclusive policies that help unlock growth in rural, seasonal, and year-round economies alike.

In Lansing, the Alliance provided testimony on the Senate "More Jobs in Michigan" bill package (SB473), advocating that any tax break incentive program requires qualifying thresholds that are accessible to small and mid-sized employers, ensuring resources are equitably distributed to rural and less populated areas of the state.

Alliance leadership testifies to the Senate Regulatory Affairs committee.

TALENT: HOUSING SUPPORT FOR NORTHERN MICHIGAN RESIDENTS

REACH & IMPACT*

- 539 Applicants
- \$815.2K Annual Economic Impact
- \$3.4M 5-Year Economic Impact
- \$88.9K Annual Tax Contribution
- 4.5 Annual Jobs Created

Alliance Partners Traverse Connect, Charlevoix Area Chamber of Commerce, Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, Petoskey Regional Chamber of Commerce along with Supporting Partners Networks Northwest and the Alliance for Economic Success worked together on the "Make Your Home in Northwest Michigan" grant program, providing \$5,000 in housing assistance to ten individuals employed by a local business in northwest lower Michigan.



Five recipients are located in Grand Traverse County, while the remaining five are spread across Emmett, Manistee, and Wexford counties. The awardees include both newcomers to Northwest Michigan and current residents establishing new homes in the region.

*IMPLAN® model, 2023 Data, using inputs provided by MakeMyMove and IMPLAN Group LLC, IMPLAN System (data and software), 16905 Northcross Dr., Suite 120, Huntersville, NC 2807

RURAL PROSPERITY: MAGNIFYING IMPACT ACROSS RURAL COMMUNITIES

Alliance leaders testified before the Michigan House Economic Competitiveness Committee, underscoring the regional impact of Revitalization and Placemaking funding, the Office of Rural Prosperity's Rural Readiness Grant, employer-assisted housing initiatives, and workforce development tools such as Going Pro. The compelling testimony was well received by legislators. The presentation focused on the regional impact of Revitalization and Placemaking funding, the Office of Rural Prosperity Rural Readiness Grant, employer-assisted housing, and workforce development programs like GoingPro.



Watch the partners' testimony via the Michigan House TV [here](#).

Through the Rural Readiness Grant Program of the Office of Rural Prosperity, Traverse Connect hosted two grant writing workshops on behalf of the Alliance footprint for over 40 regional nonprofits. Follow-up surveys of workshop participants show strong early outcomes, with 12 grants pursued totaling \$2.4 million and a 75 percent success rate by number of awards to date. This grant program demonstrated the power of the Alliance partnership to amplify impact and underscored the critical importance of sustained investment in Michigan's rural communities.

REACH & IMPACT

- \$2.4 million grant funding
- 12 grant applications
- 75% success rate by number of grants
- 122% success rate by \$ applied for



Over 40 nonprofits attended the Grant Writing Workshops facilitated by Davenport University.

ORGANIZATION UPDATES

MILESTONE MEMBERSHIP: Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce joins as 20th new member!

WELCOME NEW DIRECTOR OF NMCA

In early September, Dakota Baker joined the organization as the new Director of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance. Dakota brings extensive experience in public policy, having held prior roles in state government, congressional campaigns, and as the district liaison for Congressman Bergman. Most recently, Dakota was the Deputy Chief of Staff for State Senator John Damoose.

"The Northern Chamber Alliance just got a tremendous boost by hiring Dakota Baker to be its new Director," said Senator Damoose. "I'm not sure how we can even fill his shoes in our office, and he will be sorely missed. But, under his leadership, the Alliance will definitely reach new heights in its influence and impact."



ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP SHIFTS

The Alliance welcomed a new partner as the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce named Carmen Kott as its new President and CEO. Kott contributes her deep familiarity with the Chamber's operations and mission, and the Alliance is pleased to welcome her unique experience, energy, and vision into the group.

The Alliance also welcomed CEO of Lake Superior Community Partnership, Christopher Germain, as the new Vice Chair of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance. With his proven leadership, dedication to the region, and deep understanding of northern Michigan's needs, Christopher is poised to make significant contributions in advancing the Alliance's mission.

ALLIANCE MEMBERS

PARTNERS



SUPPORTING PARTNERS



ASSOCIATE PARTNERS



PROUD PARTNERS OF THE NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE

