

Q1 PARTNER UPDATE

ALLIANCE SETS POLICY & BUDGET PRIORITIES

On behalf of 21 chambers and economic development organizations and over 7,000 member businesses, Alliance leadership has once again compiled the legislative and budget priorities essential to communities across northern Michigan.



STATEWIDE



REGIONAL



FY27 BUDGET REQUESTS

- **Office of Rural Prosperity:** \$5M – Critical to not only maintain operations but also to provide extended services to rural communities
- Increased funding for the **Going PRO Talent Fund:** \$110M – Highly utilized program throughout the region, this is a significant tool for maintaining a talented workforce
- Continue funding for **Michigan Reconnect;** Expand the age qualification to 21+
- Sustained Funding for **Pure Michigan;** Maintain current funding levels for Pure Michigan

- \$1.5M Downtown Manistee Public Infrastructure
- \$5M Traverse City Airport Terminal Expansion
- \$641K City of Gaylord Water Infrastructure
- \$10M Lake City Dual Trunkline
- \$1M Alpena Community College Next Generation Climbing Range
- \$5M NCMC Dental Hygienist Program
- \$1.8M East Jordan Water Infrastructure

2026 POLICY FRAMEWORK

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



- Lower thresholds for rural small businesses to access Real Jobs Tax Credit
- Comprehensive economic development strategy that incorporates the needs of northern Michigan
- Extend the sunset of the Commercial Rehabilitation Act, which provides a critical redevelopment tool in rural communities
- Performance-based grants that help existing businesses and new businesses overcome obstacles to growth

HOUSING



- HB 5400 and 5401 (Cavitt): Extending sunset, allowing local municipalities to attract housing infrastructure, specifically apartment-style housing
- Any potential short-term rental legislation needs to balance local control with private enterprise
- SB 278 (Shink): Expanding the scope of the MSHDA Housing and Community Development Program to allow more utilization of the program
- Supports and incentives for workforce housing construction and availability
- Tax-Break incentives for income-restricted senior residents who downsize

WORKFORCE & TALENT



- Education: Improving and addressing 3rd-grade reading levels
- SB 233 (Anthony): Expanding MI Reconnect Program
- Supports for apprenticeship and internship programs
- Child Care – SB 733 (Damoose): Expand Regulation to allow for Micro-Centers, increasing access for families
- HB 5455 (Linting) – Removes sunset from the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact ✓

ENERGY



- HB 4007 and 4283 (Bohnak/Prestin) – Expands definition of alternative energy sources to include RICE generators.
- Incentives to lower the cost of energy for businesses and residents
- Ensure comprehensive education and information concerning economic benefits and environmental concerns of data center potential locations
- Expansion of Carbon Capture and Hydrogen Exploration



POLICY CONFERENCE KICKS OFF GUBERNATORIAL RACES

With over 630 attendees, the 2026 Northern Michigan Policy Conference once again broke attendance records and was the first event of the election year to feature all the top contending gubernatorial candidates: John James, Jocelyn Benson, Mike Duggan, Tom Leonard, Mike Cox, and Aric Nesbitt. Each gubernatorial candidate participated in a facilitated discussion with Kyle Melinn, News Editor at MIRS, throughout the day.

The Alliance was pleased to welcome back Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II for the keynote address to kick off a full day of political discourse on issues critical to northern Michigan. Two panel discussions covered Rural Talent & Population Growth as well as Rural Economic Development & Business Growth and included the following special guests: President & CEO of Business Leaders for Michigan Jeff Donofrio, President & CEO of Small Business Association of Michigan Brian Calley, Senior VP of Michigan Economic Development Corporation Matt McCauley, Senators John Damoose and Ed McBroom, and Representative Mike Hoadley.

The Northern Caucus split into Policy Pairs to discuss transportation and roads, housing, cutting red tape, and energy, which included Representatives Tom Kunse, Parker Fairbairn, Ranjeev Puri, Curt Vanderwall, Cam Cavitt, and John Roth; Senator Michele Hoytenga; Executive Director of Government Affairs for Consumers Energy Chris Iannuzzi; and President of ITC Michigan Chuck Marshall.



State Senator Mallory McMorrow joined leaders from across the state to speak at the annual Directors' Reception the night before the conference.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Continuing several annual traditions, NMCA leadership hit the road to advocate for regional needs with legislators across the state at the I-500 Snowmobile Race in Sault Ste. Marie, the UP 200 Dogsled Race in Marquette, and the State of the State in Lansing. Alliance partners had a packed two days during the State of the State festivities. They met with regional legislators and key leaders, including Speaker Matt Hall, Minority Floor Leader John Fitzgerald, the Representatives and Senators of the Northern Caucus, Senator Sam Singh, and Senator Roger Hauk, to advocate for critical appropriations that will benefit northern Michigan. They also continued the annual tradition of providing lunch to the Executive Office of the Governor, a meaningful opportunity to connect and share how our Alliance is working to build a thriving economy and vibrant rural communities.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



PRESERVING INTERSTATE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMPACT

Just days before a deadline that would see roughly 30% of doctors lose their ability to practice medicine in Michigan, state lawmakers reached a deal to rejoin the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. The interstate agreement accepts certain out-of-state licenses and allows an estimated 8,000 doctors to practice within its 40 member states. Michigan's long membership in the IMLCC has streamlined licensure for eligible physicians who want to practice in multiple states.

The Alliance took a strong stance in the face of the looming deadline, issuing a press release that called on the Michigan Legislature and the members of the Northern Caucus to extend the compact.

"At a time when northern Michigan already faces challenges in recruiting physicians, withdrawal from the IMLCC would create additional barriers to care, increase administrative burden, and further strain an already limited workforce," said Nikki Devitt, chair of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance and president and CEO of the Petoskey Regional Chamber of Commerce in the release.

ALLIANCE MEMBERS

PARTNERS



SUPPORTING PARTNERS



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