NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE

Elevating & advancing local business.

2026 Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Brian Irizarry
Email Contact: birizarry@live.com
Phone Contact: 906-275-8277
Campaign Website URL: https://www.voteirizarry.com

1. **Purpose and Responsibility**
   Why are you seeking this office, and how would you define the responsibility of the office to the people of northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula?

   I am seeking this office in order to advocate for the Upper Peninsula's unique economic needs while respecting the culture of the families that make the Upper Peninsula such a beautiful place to live year round.

2. **Jobs, Investment, and Competitiveness**
   What specific policies would you support or develop if elected, to ensure northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula can compete for jobs, investment, infrastructure, and other state and federal resources?

   I will increase our state revenue sharing funding (Act 51) in an enduring way for our local units of government in order to ensure that our local communities are adequately funded in order to stabilize and support the most important part of our rural economy, our local small businesses.

3. **Housing and Regional Partnerships**
   NMCA's policy framework calls for housing solutions and regional partnerships to address the region's critical housing shortage. What policies or ideas do you have in which you can partner with the Alliance to make a positive impact?

   I support state grants or tax credits or some kind of economic incentives for home builders.
   Due to the age of our housing stock, I would strongly support a program that focuses on renovation of homes above a certain age. For example, updating exterior windows or exterior siding or plumbing.

4. **Workforce Development and Talent Attraction**
   What are your views on programs such as Going PRO, Michigan Reconnect, and talent attraction programs? What would you do to help attract, retain, train, and grow the workforce needed by northern Michigan and Upper Peninsula employers?

   I support Michigan Going PRO and Michigan Reconnect. Building our workforce from the local level out is critical to helping our high school graduates find a debt-free pathway to a job that allows them to stay in their hometown.
   I would also be open to revising Michigan's high school graduation requirements so that more high school graduates are career ready if they are not college ready.

5. **Childcare Access**
   Please describe your view of the need for childcare in the region, and what would you do to enhance access to this resource?

   Childcare access is very important to me. I will do everything I can to provide more childcare access so that our single parents would be able to participate in the workforce. We cannot let childcare access be a barrier to our fertility rates.

6. **Education Outcomes and Funding**
   What do you believe is the best action you could take to support growth in measurable outcomes for k-12 students in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula? How well is Michigan's funding of our higher education systems working, and would you make any changes to the way we fund education in this state?

   Much of Michigan's public school funding is done at the ballot box through millages and bond issues. Aside from that voter-determined funding mechanism, there is the state budget and the per pupil spending.
   Yes we need measurable outcomes for K-12 students; however, that weight cannot be borne by teachers, para-professionals, one-to-one aids, and other educators alone. We need parents to buy into the importance of education. We need students to buy into the importance of education.
   We need to recruit better teachers and retain more teachers. That means we need to pay teachers and educators a higher salary and award retention bonuses for staying at a school for a period of time in order to encourage strong cultures at schools.
   Not every student is starting Kindergarten at the same starting line. There are major differences between students in academic achievement and social-emotional skills and major gaps in household income and support levels that we need to address as well in order to raise test scores. These test scores don't occur in a vacuum.
   If we want a state with only private schools and home schools, then our economy will suffer even more than it already is suffering because those children that need public school and have too many risk factors to overcome will become a dead weight on our economy when they become adults and parents themselves.

We need good public schools to educate and train our future employees and customer service representatives.

7. **Regulatory Climate and Small Business Growth**
   What regulations, permitting processes, taxes, mandates, or compliance burdens do you believe most limit small business growth in our region? What would you do to make our state's regulatory environment more predictable?

   Small business owners and first time entrepreneurs should be in a different category of regulatory oversight when compared to a large national or state-wide company. We must help our small business owners to be successful. I support payroll tax assistance and other relief from small business payroll taxes. The majority of our small businesses in Michigan are sole proprietorships with no employees.

8. **Affordability and Economic Vitality**
   What meaningful changes do you believe would help advance Michigan's economic vitality by making this state a more affordable place to live, work, and do business?

I will do everything I can to ensure that Michiganders can raise a family on wages they receive from full-time employment, whether they are the employer or the employee; that they receive health insurance or have access to healthcare, especially in rural Michigan; and that everyone has access to a retirement with dignity. My three priorities are Education, Healthcare, and Supporting Small Business.