



2026 Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance Candidate Questionnaire

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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 running for State Senate because I believe the people making decisions in Lansing should understand what everyday life looks like for the people those decisions affect.

I am a working mom and educator raising two young children with my husband in rural northern Michigan. The issues I hear about from families, employers and community leaders are interconnected: finding employees, finding childcare, finding housing those employees can afford, keeping health care close to home, controlling utility costs and making sure our young people can build futures here.

The responsibility of a state senator is not simply to vote in Lansing. It is to listen, bring people to the table, connect communities with resources and make sure rural Michigan has a meaningful voice when state policy and funding decisions are made.

Northern Michigan should not have to compete under policies designed primarily for larger metropolitan areas. I would advocate for solutions that recognize our geography, seasonal economies, workforce challenges and the strengths of our local communities.

My approach would be practical: listen first, work across sectors and party lines where possible, and judge proposals by whether they help people and communities succeed.

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?

Northern Michigan should have a fair opportunity to compete for investment, but that requires recognizing that rural communities often begin with different resources and different challenges than larger metropolitan areas.

I would support a stronger rural voice in state economic-development decisions and funding formulas, including programs that help existing small businesses expand, entrepreneurs get started, communities redevelop vacant or underused properties, and employers train workers for jobs that actually exist in their regions.

I also want the state to be a better partner in securing infrastructure investments. Reliable broadband, roads, water and sewer systems, affordable and dependable energy, housing and access to health care all affect whether a company can locate, expand and hire here.

I support regionally driven economic development rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. State resources should help communities build on their own strengths, from manufacturing and skilled trades to agriculture, tourism, health care, and emerging industries.

I would also bring a basic accountability test to economic incentives: What are we receiving in return? Are we creating good jobs? Is the investment strengthening the surrounding community? And are taxpayers being protected?

Economic growth should work for the people and communities already here as well as the businesses we want to attract.

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?

Housing is workforce infrastructure.

Employers across northern Michigan can recruit people, but recruitment does not work if those employees cannot find somewhere reasonably close to live that they can afford. We need more attainable housing for teachers, nurses, skilled-trades workers, service workers, young families, and others who make our communities function.

I would support state partnerships that help communities and private-sector partners increase housing supply while preserving local decision-making. That can include redevelopment of vacant or underused properties, rehabilitation of existing housing, appropriate upper-floor downtown housing, infrastructure support that makes new projects financially feasible, and partnerships with employers interested in helping address workforce housing.

I am particularly interested in regional approaches. A housing shortage does not stop at a city or county line, and neighboring communities often share the same workforce. The state can help chambers, local governments, developers, employers and housing organizations work together rather than requiring each community to solve the problem independently.

I would welcome the Alliance as a partner in identifying where state policies create barriers and in developing solutions informed by the communities and employers experiencing the problem firsthand.

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 strongly support workforce programs that connect training directly to real employment opportunities.

Going PRO is particularly valuable because it works through employers and Michigan Works! to address demonstrated talent needs and help businesses train and retain employees. Michigan Reconnect is another important tool. It now provides eligible Michigan adults beginning at age 21 with a tuition-free path at their in-district community college toward an associate degree or skills certificate.

I would protect and strengthen programs like these while making sure rural employers and workers can fully access them.

I also believe we have to broaden the conversation about talent attraction. You can bring someone to northern Michigan for a job, but keeping that person requires housing, childcare, health care, good schools, reliable broadband and a community in which they can build a life.

We should strengthen partnerships among employers, community colleges, K-12 career and technical education, unions, apprenticeship programs and Michigan Works! so training responds to regional workforce needs.

Not every successful career requires the same pathway. Four-year degrees, community college, credentials, apprenticeships and skilled trades all matter. Our goal should be to give people multiple routes to a good career while giving employers the skilled workforce they need.

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 is both a family issue and a workforce issue.

I know this personally as the mother of two young children, and I have worked on childcare issues through the Northwest Regional Child Care Planning Coalition. When parents cannot find childcare that is available, affordable and reasonably close to where they live or work, employers lose workers and families face impossible choices.

I support expanding partnerships such as Michigan's Tri-Share program, which divides eligible childcare costs among the employer, employee and state. The program was made permanent in 2026 after operating statewide as an employer-based workforce tool.

But affordability alone will not solve the problem if there are not enough providers or workers. We also need to address the supply side by strengthening the childcare workforce, helping providers remain financially sustainable and reducing unnecessary barriers to adding quality childcare capacity.

I would like to work with chambers and employers to expand employer participation in childcare solutions and identify where state policy can make those partnerships easier.

When we help parents stay in the workforce, we help employers too.

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?

My first priority would be making sure excellent teachers can remain in the classroom.

As an educator, I know that programs matter, but implementation ultimately depends on the people working directly with students. Recruiting and retaining strong teachers, providing effective literacy and academic support, addressing student mental-health needs, and giving schools the tools to intervene early are essential to improving measurable outcomes.

Michigan's FY2027 education budget includes significant new investment in literacy instruction, teacher training, tutoring and related supports. I would focus on making sure those investments produce measurable improvement and that rural districts have equitable access to resources rather than being disadvantaged because of enrollment, geography or limited administrative capacity.

For higher education, I strongly support affordable pathways tied to workforce opportunity. Community colleges are particularly important economic-development partners in northern Michigan. Michigan Reconnect, the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, skilled-trades programs and employer-college partnerships can help students earn valuable credentials without taking on unnecessary debt.

I would also encourage stronger coordination among employers, community colleges, universities, K-12 schools and apprenticeship programs so education investments correspond to regional workforce needs.

Success should be measured not simply by how much Michigan spends, but by whether students are learning, completing credentials and finding opportunities to build productive lives here.

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?

One concern I consistently hear from small businesses is not simply regulation itself, but uncertainty, delay and difficulty navigating government.

A business should be able to determine what permits are required, what standards it must meet, whom to contact and approximately how long a decision should take. Small employers do not have large legal or compliance departments to navigate multiple agencies or conflicting instructions.

I would support clearer permitting timelines, easier-to-understand requirements, better coordination among state agencies, more accessible online systems and a stronger “one front door” approach that helps businesses navigate state government. I also believe the state should examine duplicative reporting requirements and consider the effect of proposed regulations on small and rural businesses before they are implemented.

At the same time, regulatory reform should not mean eliminating legitimate protections for workers, consumers or our natural resources. It should mean making government competent, understandable and predictable.

I would regularly bring small-business owners, chambers, local economic-development organizations and relevant state agencies together to identify specific barriers. I do not believe Lansing should assume it knows where the problems are without talking to the people dealing with those systems every day.

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?

Affordability and economic vitality are directly connected.

For a family, affordability means being able to pay for housing, childcare, health care, groceries and utilities and still have something left at the end of the month. For an employer, many of

those same costs determine whether workers can afford to take a job and remain in the community.

That is why my economic agenda starts with the basic infrastructure of a working community.

We need more attainable housing, greater access to affordable childcare, reliable and reasonably priced energy, strong schools and workforce training, accessible rural health care, broadband and infrastructure that allows businesses to grow.

I would support programs that help existing businesses train employees and expand, strengthen community colleges and apprenticeship pathways, help communities increase housing supply, expand employer participation in childcare solutions, and make state government easier for entrepreneurs and small businesses to navigate.

I also believe state economic-development decisions should consider the full cost to communities. Growth should not leave residents or small businesses paying higher utility or infrastructure costs so that a large new development can receive special treatment.

Michigan becomes more competitive when people can afford to live here, businesses can find the workers they need, entrepreneurs can navigate government without unnecessary obstacles, and communities have the infrastructure to grow.

Those goals reinforce one another. That is the kind of economic development I would work toward in the State Senate.