

# Q2 PARTNER UPDATE

## OFFICE OF RURAL PROSPERITY FUNDING

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance fought hard for continued funding for the new Rural Readiness Grant Program (RRGP) from the Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP).

In July, the former Office of Rural Development was moved to the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) and subsequently renamed.

The Alliance built and led a coalition of nearly 100 supportive local and statewide stakeholders across Michigan. We made countless phone calls and sent letters of support on behalf of the coalition to the Northern Michigan delegation and legislative leadership.

We then made a final in-person push for ORP funding in Lansing in June.

Though the funds were not ultimately included in the final budget, the NMCA built a solid coalition of support and looks forward to sharing the success stories of the RRGP with lawmakers in pursuit of additional grant funding in the near future.



# BULLY PULPIT

SEPTEMBER 18 • 3:30 - 6:30 PM  
CITY OPERA HOUSE

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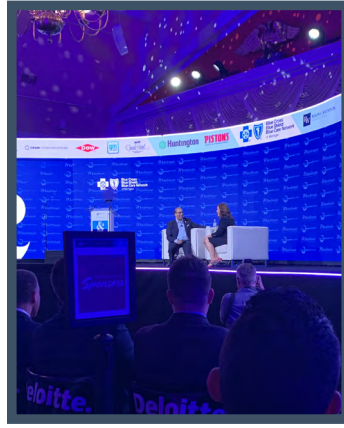


ADRIAN HEMOND



KYLE MELINN

# MACKINAC POLICY CONFERENCE



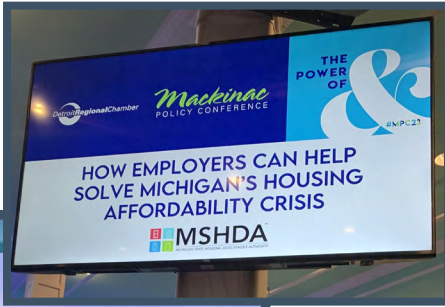
The NMCA again traveled to the Detroit Regional Chamber's Annual Mackinac Policy Conference to discuss important economic development issues with business and government leaders.

Alliance Partners observed several great discussions, including a panel of business leaders to identify "How Employers Can Help Solve Michigan's Housing Affordability Crisis." The session illustrated how businesses can be agents of change in the housing landscape, leading to positive outcomes for their companies, employees, and communities.

The panel included Cherry Republic President Bob Sutherland, alongside Jared Fleisher, Vice President, Government Affairs and Economic Development, Rocket Companies; Shannon Morgan, Managing Partner, Renovare Development, LLC; and Donald Rencher, Group Executive, Housing, Planning, and Development, City of Detroit Government. The panel was moderated by Amy Hovey, Executive Director of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

While attending the conference, Partners engaged in productive discussions with leaders from the Michigan Manufactured Housing Association, Michigan Department of Transportation, Labor and Economic Development, and Office of Rural Prosperity.

The NMCA also had the chance to connect with Senators John Damoose, Roger Victory, and Roger Hauck, along with Representatives Jenn Hill, John Roth, Betsy Coffia, Ken Borton, Tom Kunse, Phil Green, Bill G. Schuette, Speaker Joe Tate, and House Appropriations Chair Angela Witwer.



## ALLIANCE MEMBERS

### PARTNERS



### ASSOCIATE PARTNERS



## PROUD PARTNERS OF THE NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE



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## BUDGET WINS

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance advocated for budget priorities to assist with key business priorities like talent retention and development, affordable quality child care, and attainable housing.

The Alliance is proud to see many of these vital programs receive significant funding in this year's budget.

- \$70 million to temporarily lower the eligibility age for Reconnect from 25 to 21, making a tuition-free associate degree or skills training available to

350,000 more Michiganders.

- \$50 million additional investment for the ongoing costs of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, lowering costs by thousands for students, bringing the FY24 investment to \$300 million.
- \$54.75 million for the Going PRO Talent Fund.
- \$3.4 million for Tri-Share.
- \$15 million for talent action teams to fast-track assistance to businesses looking to expand or locate in Michigan.
- \$50 million for the Housing and Community Development Program to alleviate affordable housing needs across the state and revitalization downtown areas in Michigan.
- \$10 million for Missing Middle housing programs to build on existing \$50 million within the current year budget.



## RURAL READINESS GRANT PROGRAM

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance led the way in spreading the word about the new Rural Readiness Grant Program (RRGP) from the Office of Rural Prosperity.

The RRGP provides rural communities (via tax-exempt organizations) with up to \$50,000 to support collaborative planning and capacity initiatives. These competitive reimbursement grants support and invest in underserved areas and populations by providing reimbursement grant funding for capacity-building activities, development readiness initiatives, partnership and plan formation, and cross-sector collaboration.

In less than two months since the announcement of the grant program, the ORP received an impressive 86 letters of interest from across the state and is now in the process of refining those letters to proceed with the application process.

## GOVERNOR'S BREAKFAST

Several Alliance Partners gathered in Cadillac for the 45th Annual Governor's Breakfast. NMCA Director of Government Relations Henry Wolf moderated a panel discussion with representatives from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Michigan Chamber of Commerce to discuss the core responsibilities of our organizations and how we work together to advocate for the business community at all levels of government.



Cadillac Chamber President Caitlyn Stark then introduced Governor Gretchen Whitmer to provide remarks, which highlighted her administration's accomplishments with respect to education and workforce development.



Senator Gary Peters also delivered remarks about his accomplishments at the federal level.



# IMMIGRATION POLICY REFORM PROPOSAL ADOPTED

In July, the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance adopted an immigration policy framework geared toward urging the U.S. Congress to act to fill critical workforce gaps.

“Businesses in northern Michigan continue to face serious workforce challenges that could be alleviated through comprehensive immigration reform,” said Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance chair Sarah Van Horn. “It’s time that Congress make a serious effort to address immigration reform to help business owners in northern Michigan.”

“Employers in the Grand Traverse region are struggling due to workforce shortages that are largely preventable. By increasing quotas for employment-based immigration and expanding the scope of essential worker programs, the U.S. Congress can help small business owners during a time of great need,” said Warren Call, president and CEO of NMCA member organization Traverse Connect.



**NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE  
POLICY PROPOSAL RELATING TO IMMIGRATION REFORM  
FOR CONSIDERATION BY PARTNERS**  
June 5, 2023

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance reaffirms its support for national policy solutions to encourage and support responsible and well-planned legal immigration to help strengthen Michigan's economy and protect our nation's borders.

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance supports:

- Increasing the human, physical, and technological resources along our borders and ports of entry;
- Instituting modern, effective, and efficient employment verification reforms;
- Significantly increasing the annual quotas for employment-based immigrant and Non-immigrant visas;
- Expanding the scope of essential worker programs, specifically allowing employers to meet temporary labor needs in non-seasonal jobs; and
- Creating new visa options for entrepreneurs and other high-demand workers to help American employers meet their critical workforce needs.

**BACKGROUND**

Being a nation of immigrants isn't just part of America's identity. It's part of the growth engine that's made us the most powerful and prosperous country in the world. But today's immigration system is broken and in need of repair to help with our state's declining population numbers and workforce challenges.

**The Numbers Tell a Discouraging Tale:**

- Michigan is a declining population state. According to the latest US Census data (1), our state's population was estimated to be 10,044,113 residents as of July of 2022, down over 43,212 residents since April of 2020. This means less residents to fill available jobs.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics data tells us there are approximately 5.9 million workers unemployed nationally (2) and 9.9 million job openings (3)
- As the number of job openings continues to exceed the number of unemployed workers, employers will have little choice but to look beyond the native workforce.

(1) <https://www.census.gov/ipeds/data/states/2022/00000.html>  
(2) <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/lehist.html>  
(3) <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocw.html>

The proposal aims to stress the urgency of immigration reform and identify areas of agreement among business leaders of the wide range of industries operating in northern Michigan.

The proposal includes suggestions to institute modern, effective, and efficient employment verification reforms; significantly increase annual quotas for employment-based immigrant and non-immigrant visas; expand the scope of essential worker programs; create new visa options for entrepreneurs and other high-demand workers; increase the human, physical and technological resources along U.S. borders and ports of entry.



Henry Wolf appeared on UpNorthLive and 9&10 News on Wednesday, July 26 to speak about the adoption of the Immigration Policy Reform Proposal.

[Click to View the full Immigration Policy Proposal](#)

## CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR TOOL NOW AVAILABLE

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance released the new [Contact Your Legislator tool](#) to give members an easy way to provide input to legislators. The new page provides background and contact information for state legislators in northern Michigan, along with their committee assignments and email addresses. This new tool helps ensure that members have the resources they need to make their voices heard in Lansing.



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**100th House District**  
Rep. Tom Kunse  
R – Clare

Ethics and Oversight (Min. VC); Labor; Transportation, Mobility and Infrastructure

[Email Rep. Kunse](#)



**101st House District**  
Rep. Joseph Fox  
R – Newaygo

Families, Children and Seniors

[Email Rep. Fox](#)



**102nd House District**  
Rep. Curt VanderWall  
R – Ludington

Health Policy (Min. VC); Higher Education; Agriculture

[Email Rep. VanderWall](#)