



2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Detroit Lakes Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates for policies that strengthen our business community, expand workforce participation, and maintain a competitive climate across Greater Minnesota.

These priorities reflect the realities facing employers, employees, and families in our region. We support practical, balanced solutions that encourage growth, promote accountability, and protect opportunity.

1 Employer Mandate Reform

Balance worker support with business sustainability

Employers value policies that help workers care for themselves and their families. However, recent mandates have created significant financial and administrative strain—particularly for small and mid-sized businesses. Reforms must ensure clarity, cost control, and sustainable implementation.

We support:

- Practical reforms to Paid Family and Medical Leave to improve clarity, affordability, and fraud prevention
- Adjustments to ESST and other mandates to reduce compliance complexity

Programs must be predictable and workable for employers of all sizes.

2 Child Care Investment & Reform

Support workforce participation through access and flexibility

Reliable, affordable child care is essential to workforce participation and business growth. When care is unavailable, employers lose workers and families lose opportunity. Rural communities need investment and regulatory processes that expand capacity while maintaining high standards.

We support:

- Sustained, targeted funding for child care programs and workforce initiatives
- Strategies that stabilize and expand rural child care capacity
- Policies that strengthen the child care workforce pipeline
- Streamlined licensing and compliance processes that reduce unnecessary burdens while maintaining safety and quality

3 K-12 & Higher Education Flexibility and Workforce Alignment

Increase Local Funding Flexibility & Workforce Alignment

A strong economy depends on an education system aligned with workforce needs. Local schools and training providers must have flexibility to adapt programming and resources as demands evolve—particularly in Greater Minnesota.

We support:

- Greater flexibility in K-12 funding, including the ability to transfer funds to meet local priorities
- Investment in career-connected learning, including technical education, internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning
- Stronger partnerships among schools, higher education, and employers
- Funding models that recognize rural realities, including enrollment variability and workforce shortages

Education policy should strengthen the regional talent pipeline and prepare students for meaningful careers.

4 Reducing Costs & Supporting Affordability

Strengthen economic competitiveness

State policy directly impacts the cost of doing business and the cost of living. Energy, housing, taxation, and regulatory requirements influence whether employers can grow and families can thrive.

We urge policymakers to:

- Review regulatory and compliance costs before implementation
- Advance housing and workforce affordability solutions
- Maintain competitive tax and energy policies
- Ensure predictable, responsible fiscal governance

Affordability and competitiveness must remain central to state decision-making.

5 Health Care & Affordability

Address cost drivers while protecting rural access

Affordable, accessible health care is foundational to workforce stability and economic vitality. Rising costs and staffing shortages disproportionately affect Greater Minnesota. Policy must control costs while protecting rural access and provider sustainability.

We support:

- Policies that protect access to rural hospitals, clinics, EMS, and community-based services
- Payment and regulatory reforms that reflect geographic and workforce realities
- Investment in behavioral health and preventive care
- Support for long-term care, elder care, and aging-in-place models
- Workforce recruitment and retention strategies
- Careful review of new mandates to avoid unnecessary cost increases

Stable health care systems strengthen businesses and communities.

6 Inclusive Access for Greater Minnesota

Ensure statewide policies work beyond the metro

State programs and economic initiatives must reflect rural capacity, geography, and workforce realities. Policies designed for metro implementation often create barriers for Greater Minnesota.

We advocate for:

- Equitable access to funding opportunities
- Grant structures scaled to rural communities
- Recognition of geographic and workforce differences in statewide policy implementation

Our Commitment

The Detroit Lakes Regional Chamber will actively engage with legislators, state agencies, and partner organizations to advocate for policies that:

- Strengthen workforce participation
- Support employer sustainability
- Promote fiscal responsibility
- Ensure Greater Minnesota competitiveness

We serve as a resource and partner in advancing policies that create long-term prosperity for our region.

These priorities were developed based on member input, regional needs, and current policy trends, then recommended to and approved by the Chamber Board of Directors. They will guide our advocacy efforts and help ensure a consistent, business-focused voice as we engage with legislators on behalf of our members and community.