

Laurentian Chamber of Commerce - Legislative Committee Position Statement on Education and Workforce Development

The Laurentian Chamber of Commerce Legislative Committee evaluates legislation, rule making and policy decisions of local, state and federal regulators and recommends a position of support, neutrality, or opposition to the Board concerning ordinances, bills, rules and policies. The Legislative Committee has drafted broad policy statements that guide the evaluation on major areas of legislation.

From the perspective of business and commerce, the goal of education and workforce development policy is to meet the labor demands of the local economy with candidates that excel beyond competing non-local business, positioning local business for success, and further develop their ability to be exporters of goods, services, and expertise. For the Laurentian Chamber of Commerce, one of the major industries impacting our economy is mining and the associated technical, professional, financial and legal service providers supporting this industry.

We do not have enough students targeting local post-secondary education in the trades or other essential professions to meet the demand. At the same time, there are alternates to the traditional K-12 education programs that incorporate innovative ways to expose students to future careers in both the trades and other areas of professional expertise. The intent of this policy would be to balance the immediate workforce needs of the region and our people, and to make our region competitive in all sectors in the long-run. In order to do this, we should continue to value traditional education cores including literacy, STEM and civics.

The Chamber is generally supportive of secondary education bills and policy that do the following:

- Encourage innovation while maintaining core education.
- Foster programs that include exposure of students to the private sector and educate them about future careers while acknowledging the value of the trades.
- Support programs that include innovative ways of teaching including internships and school-to-work initiatives.
- Encourage professionalization of teachers, through:
 - Usable performance metrics.
 - Providing clear, concise and understandable teaching methods and standards through teacher involvement.
 - Reforming teacher licensing to allow the greatest number of teachers to compete.
- Promote equal access for education.
- Encourage collaboration and efficiency among school districts.

The Chamber is generally supportive of bills and policy in post-secondary education that do the following:

- Reduce or stabilize tuition rates.
- Increase financial assistance through scholarships, grants and loan programs.
- Increase the involvement of the major employers in the development of curricula.
- Increase school-to-work partnerships.