



March 22, 2026

Representative Mueller and Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business organization representing more than 6,300 business and over half a million employees, thank you for the opportunity to support HF3650 (Rep. Mueller), legislation establishing a student career pathways framework in Minnesota.

The Chamber leads the statewide business community to advance responsible public policy that creates jobs, enables commerce, and grows the economy, when looking at the key factors of GDP and job growth, a strong workforce, and smart public investment.

Employers in every community and in every industry report that finding, hiring, and training workers remains a barrier to doing business in Minnesota. In fact, after Minnesota's high cost of doing business, the lack of available workers is cited as a top barrier that prevented businesses from investing and expanding in Minnesota per the Chamber's Grow Minnesota!® program's State of Business Retention and Expansion in Minnesota reports.

The Chamber's top strategy for confronting our state's long-term workforce readiness demands starts by aligning our state's K-12 education and workforce systems with economic data and needs. Building on that, by connecting students to careers in their region or in the state, we are intentionally creating some stickiness to Minnesota with the goal to retain young talent in the state.

HF3650 would establish a "student career pathways framework" to improve student access to high-quality, employer-connected career experiences by removing barriers and strengthening coordination among education, workforce, and postsecondary systems. The intent is to support local innovation and flexibility in implementing personalized learning plans and career pathway exploration.

The Minnesota Chamber's Foundation's Business Education Networks (BENs) are already bringing this strategy to life. BENs connect businesses and local chambers with students, educators, and workforce training programs so students are aware of career opportunities in their own communities and the coursework and training required for those jobs. BENs have nearly 30 regional partners across Minnesota. A few examples include:

- **The Metro North Chamber** has been a long-time partner and has provided bus tours of local industries along with a number of other opportunities for students.
- Teacher externships and a focus on manufacturing and trades careers have been an impactful focus for **the Waconia Chamber of Commerce**.
- **The Burnsville Chamber** is focused on skills certification and workplace learning and has offered teacher externships.
- **The St. Paul Chamber** has a number of programs but has been engaged in showcasing health care careers in the region. Both St. Paul and Burnsville were partners with the Minnesota Chamber Foundation in providing paid career experience to underrepresented students the past two years.
- Led by the **Lakeville Area Chamber**, Lakeville Works is a model partnership between the business community and the local school district, the high schools specifically. The business support of this initiative is a model for other communities.

- **The Woodbury Chamber** plays a role in providing students with connections to employers by bringing business leaders into the classroom to showcase career opportunities in the community.
- **The Eden Prairie Chamber** works with Eden Prairie High School on events to showcase careers and internships.
- **The Rochester Chamber** hosts a large regional career fair providing students with direct contact with employers.
- **The Winona Area Chamber** was the Minnesota Chamber's first BEN partner, and has a comprehensive program that continues to grow, currently focused on providing opportunities for PSEO students.
- **The St. Cloud Chamber** hosts the Unite for Success scholarship program and works closely with area schools.
- One of **the Willmar Chamber's** programs is Classroom to Career, bringing business, industry and trade leaders into the classroom to help student understand the pathway to high demand careers.

What makes these partners particularly important to us is the diversity of their communities and school districts. In addition to those listed above, the Chamber's BEN programs exist with our partners in the following local chambers: Brainerd Lakes; Faribault Area; Fergus Falls Area; Greater Mankato Growth; Marshall Area; New Ulm Area; Northfield Area; Owatonna Area; Redwood Area; River Heights; Shakopee; Twin Cities North; and White Bear Area.

At the Chamber, we believe that students are better prepared for their futures when meaningful career connections are made during their school years. Career exploration, hands-on training opportunities and employer partnerships, work-based learning, and dual-credit options for students all should be foundational components of the K-12 system.

This requires that the K-12 education system is intentionally fostering a "future ready" and career pathways approach to their programming. As part of that effort, school leaders should have ongoing engagement with businesses to maintain an understanding of current and future employment needs in order to better support both teachers and students. We also think teachers should have professional development support throughout their careers including externships in businesses.

Simply put, the state needs to ensure every high school graduate is "future ready" – both practically and academically – with the tools they need to succeed in the state's economy, either directly into the workforce or through better established pathways that connect with postsecondary opportunities.

Minnesota's economic future requires a strategic focus on the workforce from business leaders and policymakers. We appreciate the opportunity to share the great work BENs are doing in their communities in furtherance of the objectives laid out in HF3650 and hope policymakers consider building on this experience as the committee seeks to improve our education and workforce development policy, focus, and financing mechanisms.

The Chamber is looking forward to working with members of this committee to retain a strong quality of life by focusing on solutions to grow our economy, build our workforce, and encourage private sector investment and innovation in Minnesota this session. It is for these reasons the Chamber supports **HF3650 (Rep. Mueller), legislation establishing a student career pathways framework in Minnesota.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share this perspective with the committee.

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 Director, Workplace Management and Workforce Development Policy
 Minnesota Chamber of Commerce



March 23, 2026

Re: Support for HF3650, Establishing a student career pathways framework

Co-Chair Kresha, Co-Chair Youakim, and members of the House Education Finance Committee,

We are writing in support of HF3650, which would create a statewide career pathways framework and provide a vital connection between students' high school learning experience, career exploration, and postsecondary options. Too often these interconnected areas are treated as separate entities, but in today's rapidly changing college and career landscape, students deserve comprehensive preparation for their life within and beyond the classroom. Moreover, the career pathway model has a track record of success, which can be expanded by ensuring early on ramps into viable career options.

Minnesota has ambitious goals for postsecondary attainment that we are failing to meet, and the more we can do to make high school relevant and engaging for all, the more we can advance progress toward this goal. The 2015 legislature set the goal that by 2025, 70% of Minnesotan adults would complete a postsecondary certificate or degree. We fell short of that goal, with glaring gaps by race and ethnic community. Just 29% of American Indian adults, 39% of Latino adults, 41% of Black adults in Minnesota have a qualifying credential.¹ For high school graduation, American Indian, Latino, and Black students are graduating at lower rates than both the statewide average and their white peers.²

To address these gaps, support Minnesota students both academically and in career exploration, and ensure that they can access a meaningful career with a living wage as adults, we need robust, cross-sector solutions. Provisions in this bill, such as coordination between the commissioners of education, higher education, and employment and economic development, reflect that need. Most importantly, the bill provides a student-centered approach to career pathway exploration, including infusion of a career development lens into personalized learning plans, that will empower young people with the information and support they need to thrive in adulthood no matter what postsecondary path they choose.

Thank you to Representative Mueller for bringing this bill forward. We hope the committee will support HF3650.

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¹ Minnesota Office of Higher Education, "Educational Attainment Goal 2025."
<https://ohe.mn.gov/reports/educational-attainment-goal-2025>

² Minnesota Report Card. Accessed February 24, 2026.