



February 25, 2026

Representative Dave Baker, Committee Co-Chair  
Representative Dave Pinto, Committee Co-Chair  
Members of the House Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy  
Committee

RE: Letter of Support for HF3650 — Student Career Pathways Framework

Dear Co-Chair Baker, Co-Chair Pinto, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Shakopee Area Chamber of Commerce and the businesses and organizations we represent in Scott County, I write in strong support of HF3650, authored by Representative Mueller, which establishes a Student Career Pathways Framework. We urge the committee to advance this legislation.

The Shakopee Area Chamber of Commerce has long recognized that connecting students to meaningful career experiences is one of the most important investments a community can make in its economic future. We serve as the convening organization for the Shakopee Academies at Shakopee High School, a career-connected learning model that brings together educators and local employers to expose students to real-world career pathways. That work has demonstrated, firsthand, both the transformative impact of employer-engaged education and the barriers that too often prevent schools and businesses from working together effectively. HF3650 directly addresses those barriers by creating a voluntary, flexible statewide framework that encourages alignment among secondary education, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce system — without imposing new mandates on local districts.

The case for this legislation is made compellingly by Scott County's own demographic data. According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Scott County is home to 157,206 residents as of 2024, making it the ninth largest county in the state and the tenth fastest growing from 2020 to 2024. However, population projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center tell a more complex and urgent story. While Scott County's overall population is expected to grow from approximately 159,790 in 2025 to 176,504 by 2035, that growth is driven almost entirely by an aging population. The 65–74 age cohort is projected to grow by 31.5 percent, the 75–84 cohort by 63.7 percent, and the 85 and older cohort by 73.8 percent over that same period.

At the same time, the population segments that represent our future workforce pipeline are projected to shrink. The 5–14 age group is expected to decline by 4.5 percent, and the 15–24 age group — the students entering the workforce — is projected to decline by 5.8 percent between 2025 and 2035. This is not simply an educational challenge. It is an economic one. As Scott County ages and its younger population contracts, the community cannot afford to lose young talent to other regions. Career pathway opportunities that connect students to local employers are one of the most effective tools we have to retain that talent and build the workforce our businesses will need in the years ahead.

That need is already acute. Scott County’s unemployment rate stands at 2.4 percent, below the statewide rate of 3.0 percent, and the Twin Cities region posted 66,411 job vacancies in 2024 alone. Scott County’s economy spans a diverse range of industries, including manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, health care, accommodation and food services, and professional and technical services. Many of the region’s in-demand occupations — from skilled trades to health care to technology — require intentional career preparation that begins well before graduation.

HF3650 responds directly to this reality by encouraging schools to strengthen the use of personalized learning plans, expand work-based learning and job shadowing, and support smoother transitions from high school to postsecondary education and training. It supports postsecondary enrollment options, concurrent enrollment, dual training, youth skills training, and registered or pre-apprenticeship opportunities — all pathways our member employers are eager to participate in and support. Critically, the bill’s voluntary approach respects local decision-making while providing schools with the guidance and resources they need to build stronger connections with the business community.

The Shakopee Academies model has shown what is possible when chambers of commerce, school districts, and employers work in concert. HF3650 creates the infrastructure to replicate and scale that kind of collaboration across Minnesota. For Scott County, ensuring that students see a clear and compelling path to a career here at home is not a peripheral concern — it is central to our community’s long-term economic vitality and competitiveness.

We respectfully urge the committee to support HF3650 and thank Representative Mueller for her leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Tim Zunker  
President  
Shakopee Area Chamber of Commerce