



February 25, 2026

Representative Mueller and Members of the House Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy 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 communities and the coursework and training required for those jobs.

To highlight a few BENs, the Burnsville Chamber and Willmar Lakes Area Chamber have long been BEN partners, and St. Paul has joined our efforts in recent years with a strong and growing program. What makes these partners particularly important to us is the diversity of their communities and school districts. Burnsville is focused on skills certification and workplace learning and has offered teacher externships. One of Willmar'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. St. Paul 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.

In addition to Burnsville, Willmar Lakes, and St. Paul, the Chamber's BEN programs exist with our partners in the following local chambers: Brainerd Lakes; Eden Prairie; Faribault Area; Fergus Falls Area; Greater Mankato Growth; Lakeville; Marshall Area; MetroNorth; New Ulm Area; Northfield Area; Owatonna Area; Redwood Area; River Heights; Rochester Area; St. Cloud Area; Shakopee; Twin Cities North; Waconia; White Bear Area; and Winona 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.

Lauryn Schothorst
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Minnesota Chamber of Commerce