

State Legislative Candidates – House District 106 – Marie Fielder

1. Why are you interested in serving the people, families, and businesses in northern Michigan?

I believe that Northeast Michigan is an untapped gem, in need of a little polishing. Northeast Michigan is rich in natural resources, great places to recreate, cool places to eat and socialize and yet - it is rural and quiet. It offers a slower pace of living that is attractive to visitors and people wanting a quieter pace of life. But, there is no doubt that there are issues that need to be addressed from our Legislators such as but not limited to: building and expanding the availability of quality health care, expansion of broad-band, innovative and robust public school programs so that our youth enter the 21st century world prepared and confident and we need to increase our availability of affordable housing options. I am not confident that our Representatives have focused their attention on our region like they have been tasked to do. I believe that political rancor has taken hold over the needs of the people. I have over 3 decades of working with families in and around NE MI. I have heard their concerns and have worked with those families for the betterment of their children. I am ready to take that philosophy and work ethic to Lansing to deliver support for NE Michiganders (including business) so that we will not just grow - but thrive.

2. How will you use your role to support the economic vitality of our region?

I will be engaged in local government and business. I will work with schools, hospitals, industry and families to develop plans for our communities that everyone can get behind and that Lansing will support. I will be the spokesperson for our District and I am not afraid of getting my feet wet to get the hard work done.

3. Do you believe local government should have broad authority to regulate short-term rentals?

I am not sure what is meant by broad authority. I am hearing from local governments the desire and want of de-regulation of short-term rentals, but at the same time I am hearing that they are concerned because short-term rentals are cutting into locals being able to afford and find, appropriate and affordable housing. We need solutions for this that are both prosperous for our communities and yet not diminish our families who are living, working and raising their families within our communities.

4. How would you address the shortage of skilled labor in northern Michigan?

Northeast MI is lacking in childcare options so that skilled labor can return to the workforce. When childcare slots are found, they are often more expensive than many families can afford. We need affordable childcare options and one solution is to move childcare options to our public

schools. Training to be a Childcare professional could be provided in those settings. Michigan is an age 0-26 state for special education. So, why can't we offer that for all children and provide day care as needed within the schools? This is one method of addressing skilled labor. Other methods to address the shortage of skilled labor might be to provide more professional options within our community colleges and of course we need to pay our labor force appropriate wages, while also affording them benefits for sick time, vacation time etc.

5. How would you prioritize leftover funds from federal aid packages and surplus dollars in the state's general fund?

Federal aid is the people's money. If there are funds leftover, we should prioritize where the funds would best be spent and in all cases it should be spent on the people in our State and not so much to boost the income of governmental employees.

6. The availability of housing is a barrier to business growth and talent attraction in our region. How do you intend to address the affordable housing shortage?

I have been attending Housing Coalition meetings in and around our District such as; Alpena, Cheboygan and I have attended Presque Isle City Council meetings in which this has been addressed as a concern. I am in no way, an expert. There is so much to understand. Some of the suggestions include:

- Building a database of all rentals in the county, with ownership contact information as a source of data and accountability if blight is a concern.
- Soften zoning regulations to allow for variability in new housing.
- Increase incentives for Builders/Trademen to build new structures.
- Alpena Community College would like to offer more housing options for their students. They are interested in more single person/small family housing options. They have the resources to put toward this project, but it appears there are roadblocks. I am not aware of what those roadblocks are, but perhaps if we work to alleviate those roadblocks, ACC could begin construction!

7. Many families struggle to secure quality child care. This can be a barrier to attracting talent and keeping people in or bringing people back into the workforce. How will you work to increase access to affordable and quality child care?

We need to incentivize and prioritize our childcare options. Bussing options to and from childcare centers is a great way to encourage support for our families.

Increase pay for childcare workers. My daughter works in childcare and enjoys it. She is compensated well by NE MI standards, but she lives in metro-Detroit. Her salary is not near enough to support her in her residential area. Rent is high. This is a cycle that needs to be addressed. Please see #4 for more information.

8. What are your solutions for supporting businesses being affected directly by inflation and supply chain costs?

Post COVID inflation and supply chain issues are likely going to disrupt our cycle for years. Some ways to address this might be to:

- Keep a close eye on stock: pay your suppliers ahead of time to guarantee your stock arrives as soon as they get it in.
- Explain the issues to customers so that they understand that much of what is going on, is not necessarily under business' control. When this is explained to me - I tend to offer sympathy and patience and transparency is important.
- Re-evaluate price of stock and increase if necessary. Again, be honest with your customers. BUT, businesses cannot be greedy. And, price-gouging needs to be appropriately addressed.