

## **Trina Borenstein, House District 106**

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

I live with the people, families, and businesses in Northern Michigan. This is my home, and I want it to become an even better place for us all to live.

**2. Describe three statewide strategies/policies that you would support to enhance economic growth in the region.**

Perhaps the most important strategy for enhancing economic growth in this region is universal coverage for broadband and cell phone service. What Internet service that is available is unreliable and expensive. Business owners, school children, anyone who needs to communicate electronically, should not have to drive to their nearest library (with its limited hours) to get online to check on or place an order, or to get the information they need for their studies, or to communicate with their government. There have been many attempts over the last 15 years or so to secure Internet service, but as long as rural areas have to depend on businesses that want to be assured of a profit, it is not going to happen. The low numbers of prospective subscribers make these areas something to be avoided. This was also a problem in the first half of the last century with electricity and telecommunications. This problem was solved by the Rural Electrification and Rural Communications Acts of the 1940s. I believe that such a tactic is necessary to compel businesses to offer services to low population areas. They will not do it out of the goodness of their hearts.

**3. Describe the policies that you see being the most effective/ineffective at addressing the housing shortage in our region?**

It is very unfortunate, but I do not see any policies being effective at addressing the housing shortage. The city of Alpena has instituted a Housing Task Force, and a Land Bank, to try to address this problem, but it is inchoate, and has not made a lot of progress so far. There are basically no rentals available. It is a terrible problem for people starting out in our

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communities. When a young adult is ready to move into their first place, there is nothing for them. When someone wants to move into the area for work, there is nothing for them. It can take months to find appropriate housing, but there is nowhere for them to stay while they are looking.

My husband and I have an acquaintance that does odd jobs for people in our community. Over a year ago now, he became homeless. We called every governmental, religious, and social agency we could find in several counties, with the same results. For the most part, they all had mechanisms in place to help people in this man's situation, but absolutely no resources. No shelters were available - the one that exists has a several-months-long waiting list. He never got in. He had already gotten on the waiting list for Section 8 housing, but that list is years long. He ended up sleeping in a storage unit until he got caught, but it was a miserable and cold experience, and he is not a young man. Because he spent most of his life working on his father's farm, he never contributed to Social Security, and so now collects so little that it barely makes a difference.

District 106 has nearly twice as many structures as families. There are unused buildings everywhere. The first thing I would do is fund the organizations that already exist so that they can help the underserved. Second, I would try to secure funds to rehab the existing buildings to be adequate for living in. It would not be difficult, and it would not be expensive.

**4. What statewide policies best support talent retention and attraction in Northern Michigan?**

Setting minimum standards of pay that show respect for the work of first responders, law enforcement, and teachers, would be a very good start. Raising the minimum wage to a point where a small family doesn't have to hold down three full-time jobs in order to sustain itself at subsistence levels.

**5. How will you work to increase access to affordable and quality childcare?**

Like everywhere else that young families live, there is a dire need for childcare. When both parents need to work multiple jobs to sustain their family, it leaves very little time for the parents to care for their own children. This is in itself a critical issue. Raising wages would allow parents to work less, and to afford childcare. Where childcare can be utilized, childcare facilities will emerge. Livable wages for childcare workers will attract and retain a better workforce.

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

Our state, and our country, is experiencing all-time lows in inflation. I have not yet studied supply chain issues, but I am aware that prices are artificially high and that we haven't completely recovered from the supply chain losses brought on by the pandemic. I believe that as long as manufacturers are willing to pay their executives more than their workers by many orders of magnitude, price gouging will not go away. I would support legislation that mandated a maximum level that the highest paid executive could be paid compared to the lowest-paid worker. Say, two hundred times. At \$15/hr, which is provably below a "living wage," a worker would gross \$31,200. Two hundred times that is \$6,240,000. I think that is enough to live on. That also incentivises executives to pay workers more - workers make more, execs make more.

