

U.S. Rep. Jack Bergman, MI-01

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

As a former small business owner, I understand the importance of a good economic climate for entrepreneurs, families, and communities to flourish. I know firsthand how damaging excessive government interference in our businesses and daily lives can be – both fiscally and socially. That’s why I continuously fight to roll back heavy-handed regulations, bureaucratic red tape, and big government spending – all of which shuts our mom-and-pop storefronts and diminishes our purchasing power. When our Northern Michigan businesses thrive, it produces a ripple effect of positivity and empowerment for every community and for our most important unit: families. I will keep championing the needs and concerns of our First District constituents and business owners so that our entire state can economically prosper once again.

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

Access to fast and reliable broadband internet has become essential and unfortunately rural areas like northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula run the risk of being left behind. The state and federal government have made significant investments to connect rural America. I am focused on working with ISPs and the communities they serve to bring broadband to every home.

The economic heartbeat of the entire Great Lakes region runs through the Soo Locks. Construction delays and piecemeal funding have delayed the new lock until 2030. I will continue to work with the US Army Corps of Engineers, my colleagues in Congress, the White House, and state lawmakers to ensure taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and we avoid more unnecessary holdups in constructing the new lock.

The Trump tax cuts unleashed unparalleled economic growth for individuals and businesses alike. Next year major provisions of those cuts

are set to expire and we must build off the successes of that tax policy to usher in an era of prosperity and low inflation.

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

As a lawmaker, one of the most important parts of crafting effective legislation – no matter the issue – is recognizing what doesn't work. When it comes to the rural housing crisis, one policy that falls short, despite making headlines with Kamala Harris's recent endorsement, is rent control. Time and time again, rent controls – wherever implemented – have worsened, not improved, the housing crisis. Capping rents below rates set by natural market supply and demand discourages property owners from leasing to working- and middle-class earners, leading to a drop in the available housing stock, and in turn, raising prices. On top of that, developers are less likely to build new housing where heavy-handed government regulations limit their potential returns.

Tackling the housing crisis in rural areas requires a two-pronged approach that looks at both building new homes and repairing the ones already there. Developers need incentives to build in rural areas, and federal programs – like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and the Department of Agriculture's Section 524 Rural Housing site loan program – play a key role. Among others, these programs provide loans, grants, and loan guarantees to make rural housing projects more financially viable, encouraging both new construction and the upkeep of existing homes. Moreover, state governments can further boost these efforts by offering additional incentives, like tax relief for developers who take on low- and middle-income housing projects.

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

It's no secret that people – and particularly young people – are moving away from the rural communities in which they were raised, in search of better opportunities, whether educational, economic, social, etc. If we want to keep our communities strong, we need to bring these better opportunities to them.

Investing in education and workforce development is key. Rural school districts must have the funding and resources necessary to give parents confidence in the quality of their kids' education. Otherwise, young families will move away in search of better schools elsewhere. Similarly, our colleges and vocational schools need the right funding to offer the degrees

and specialized training programs in high-demand, well-paying fields, such as health care, agriculture, technology, and manufacturing. If young adults don't feel good about their job prospects after finishing school, they'll simply leave. Investing in education and workforce development is a smart move – it helps us retain a skilled, educated workforce that will boost the local economy and strengthen our communities.

After we've encouraged young people to stay, it's just as important to motivate them to settle down in the community. One way we can do this is by offering tax breaks and incentives for entrepreneurs looking to start businesses here. On top of that, we can offer tax credits to companies looking to relocate to our area. When they see local businesses thriving, it gives them even more reason to move into and contribute to our communities.

However, none of this would be feasible without robust investment in rural infrastructure – including housing and broadband. In the absence of affordable and accessible housing, families are forced to move – once again highlighting the critical importance of the housing development programs discussed earlier. Additionally, broadband is integral to every aspect of our daily lives – from working, learning, and communicating – and yet, many of our rural communities still lack access to high speed, affordable connectivity. We must prioritize rural broadband access by increasing federal investments through grants to close the digital divide.

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

Hard-working families across America rely on affordable, quality childcare, but for many, high costs and limited options put this essential service out of reach. Too many parents are left juggling work and childcare, with some having no other option than to leave their jobs entirely, directly impacting their ability to provide for and support their families.

Employer-provided child care is a promising solution that can help meet both the needs of working families and the workforce demands of employers. Families may find this option more accessible, especially in rural areas which often have fewer independent care centers, while employers could benefit from a larger labor pool and improved recruitment and retention by offering child care.

Thankfully, the federal tax code includes the Employer-Provided Child Care Credit, which helps offset some of the costs businesses face when they provide child care options for their employees. However, many businesses – especially small, family-owned ones and those located in

rural areas – are unable to take full advantage of this credit due to certain eligibility requirements. What's desperately needed is an expansion of the credit so it can reach more businesses, benefiting employers and families alike.

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

The policies of the current administration have put businesses in an impossible spot. We must focus on creating a more favorable business environment by reducing regulatory burdens, cutting taxes, and encouraging domestic production. By lowering the tax burden and reducing red tape, we can help businesses keep more of their earnings and invest in growth and innovation. I also support initiatives to strengthen our supply chains by incentivizing domestic manufacturing and reducing dependence on foreign sources for critical goods. By implementing these measures, we can support our businesses, drive economic growth, and ensure long-term prosperity.

