**2020 Education and Outreach Agenda**

The North Country Alliance supports programs and services that promote the social and economic well-being of our communities across Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Clinton, Essex, Franklin and Hamilton Counties in New York State.

**New York is a diverse state; hence programs with a “one-size-fits-all” approach are not the best mechanism to affect positive job growth.**

The North Country Alliance ***strongly opposes***:

* **The imposition of a prevailing wage mandate on economic development projects**. While this language focuses on redefining ‘public works projects,’ if enacted, it would require every project financed in whole, or in part, with funds, subsidies, or tax exemptions provided by a state or local public authority, to pay prevailing rates of wages and supplements. Making all projects public will increase the costs of these projects and, ultimately, many projects will not be completed. These projects include schools, hospitals, libraries, affordable housing, historical rehabilitation, and small businesses, to name but a few**. This act would be detrimental to New York’s North Country.**
* **Language reauthorizing, and ultimately expanding, MWBE requirements on projects funded with public funds.** The North Country Alliance has consistently stated that regional disparity must be considered when determining MWBE goals for state funding. The state’s disparity study has not taken into consideration the lack of certified minority or women-owned businesses in the North Country. The effect on the North Country has been detrimental. This traditionally increases the costs of the projects due to time, transportation and other costs associated with distance. **Any legislation to expand the current MWBE requirements, or increase goals, must reflect a regional percentage consistent with a region’s diversity and disparity**.

The North Country Alliance ***strongly supports***:

* **Continuation of the ‘Floor Model’ of Community College Funding.** The ‘Floor Model’ provides predictable base level funding for campuses. Reverting to the full FTE funding model with State Aid per FTE of $2,947 would translate to a $22.7 million cut in funding to SUNY community colleges having a detrimental impact on most community colleges across the state.
* **Increased funding for the Five-Year Infrastructure Plan.** We strongly encourage the investment in infrastructure in the North Country to support economic development, especially in rural broadband.

* **Small business tax relief.** The budget proposes to reduce taxes on small businesses by 40%. Small businesses are the backbone of the North Country economy and foster growth in our region.
* **Educating tomorrow’s workforce.** The budget proposes increasing the income cap for the Excelsior Scholarship. The North Country Alliance recognizes that many job skills needed in the 21st Century workforce are obtained through technical schools and trade programs. We support funding that promotes technical skills and trades for providing relevant workforce development skills.
* **Robust, empowered and integrated local development agencies and corporations** are the frontline partners for ensuring the successful execution of the Governor’s Regional Councils and local community initiatives. Any efforts to erode their powers and effectiveness would be detrimental to economic development in the North Country.