



## 2024 North Country Alliance Education and Outreach Agenda

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

### HOUSING FOR ALL

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Housing that is affordable to all income levels, and especially those with 80%-200% area median income levels, is critically needed in the North Country. **The NCA strongly supports** the North Country Regional Economic Development Council’s initiatives to capitalize:

- A North Country Housing Grant/Loan Program for flexible, gap financing to develop housing for residents with incomes in the 80%-200% AMI;
- A technical assistance program to assist communities to address zoning, land use, comprehensive planning, infrastructure, and other issues that may impede housing development;
- A matching grant program to assist municipalities with planning and pre-development costs associated with the development of workforce housing.

### WORKFORCE & CHILDCARE

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**The NCA supports funding and policies currently proposed that promote the development of our workforce, including investment in affordable, quality childcare.** The lack of affordable childcare is a contributing factor to the out-migration of workers, and to people choosing to leave the workforce exacerbating a historically low unemployment rate. Eighty-six percent, 86%, of census tracts in the region are identified as child care deserts.

The region won \$10 million as part of the Governor’s Challenge and is using the funds to connect transitioning Fort Drum soldiers and spouses to careers and jobs in the region. *Affordable workforce housing and childcare are critical for the North Country to successfully implement the Next Move NY program.*

### BROADBAND

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**The NCA strongly encourages funding for rural broadband and cellular service.** Significant progress has been made in bringing access to high speed, affordable broadband, and cellular service to rural areas. **The NCA strongly opposes** excessive fees, other charges or mandates, passed on to broadband providers that negatively affect deployment of fiber or equipment to rural areas.

Between January 2022 and November 2023, there was over \$17.5 million in Affordable Connectivity Program claims affecting 31,728 households in the region. While these funds are federal, there is a risk that the program will end in April 2024. **The NCA strongly encourages** the state to work with the federal government to continue funding for this extremely important program.

### TOURISM

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**The NCA supports** funding and policies to strengthen the tourism industry in our rural region, including the Market NY Program and I Love NY matching funds. **The NCA further supports** the adoption of legislation related to the short-term rental industry, which if enacted, would enable municipalities to better support, manage, and monitor the development and impact of short-term rentals on local communities. **The NCA is grateful** for the \$82 million in continued capital investment in the Olympic Regional Development Authority.

*Serving Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, Essex, Hamilton Counties*

## HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE NORTH COUNTRY

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The North Country is home to many private and state higher education campuses. All are economic drivers within their respective communities, not only through payrolls but the dollars going into the communities by students. All are struggling due to changing demographics and rising costs. **The NCA supports** the fair and equitable distribution of SUNY funding to **ALL** SUNY campuses and additional funding for tuition assistance programs.

**The NCA strongly supports** the NY Community College Association of Presidents “Empire State Community College Workforce Guarantee” requesting \$97 million in operating support for community colleges to expand workforce development. Our community colleges are critical in training our current and future workforce.

## PRISON CLOSURES AND REDEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

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**The NCA opposes the further closing of prisons in the North Country.** DOCCS has closed seven facilities in the North Country in the last 15 years; not a single one of which has been redeveloped or repurposed. The economic impact on the communities with closures is disproportionately severe and the state now owns millions of square feet of empty prison space in the region. The NCA encourages the state to provide financial resources and redevelopment assistance to communities and economic development organizations seeking to repurpose closed facilities and to not close any additional prisons in the North Country until it demonstrates meaningful success in repurposing the seven which are already closed.

## CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

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**The NCA supports the development of renewable energy generation capacity.** The state must continue to invest in critical infrastructure to address changing regional electrical grid requirements and to efficiently move the supply of green energy across the state. The North Country supplies significant hydroelectric, wind and solar electricity, but is limited to future growth by adequately-sized delivery infrastructure. Also, state mandates to use electric-only durable goods (i.e. appliances) before the delivery issue is resolved will ultimately stress the power grid. State policies and mandates must support energy resilience while not imposing excessive costs to the consumer.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

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**The NCA supports funding and policies for the development of critical water and wastewater infrastructure** that support business and housing growth in rural communities. Many communities do not score competitively in the state’s infrastructure programs under the Disadvantaged Communities criteria. Scoring criteria needs to be revised to provide parity in scoring/funding for rural communities. **The NCA further supports** renewed funding of NY FAST for the development of shovel-ready industrial sites.



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