



**NIAGARAUSA**  
C H A M B E R



# 2026 ADVOCACY AGENDA



## **NIAGARA USA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2026 Advocacy Agenda**

The Niagara USA Chamber of Commerce, Niagara County's leading business advocacy organization, is pleased to roll out our guiding principles for the Niagara USA Chamber's 2026 advocacy agenda. We are proud of our advocacy efforts and will continue to engage in actions that support our mission. Through these principles we are highlighting various courses of action that we undertake as the voice of our membership and the community. The Chamber believes in examining each issue for its merits and encourages constructive dialogue in the effort to promote economic development, business growth and community enhancement.

- 1. We advocate for policies in New York State and Niagara County that advance an all-options energy pathway which leverages existing infrastructure, factors community input and regional differences into the development of projects while safeguarding affordability and reliability; we oppose gas bans and/or electrification mandates that will drive up the cost of doing business.**
- 2. We advocate against any proposed increases to New York State's corporate income tax rate.**
- 3. We advocate against new burdensome regulations on employers, especially small businesses, and for New York State to strengthen outreach to employers to educate them in regards to any new state regulations, timelines and responsibilities.**
- 4. We advocate for policies at the federal, state and local level that strengthen the U.S./Canada relationship in trade, tourism, border governance and regional economic development.**
- 5. We advocate for a comprehensive strategy to preserve – and strengthen – Niagara County's health care ecosystem, ensuring that residents in all localities have access to affordable essential and emergency services.**
- 6. We advocate for New York State to implement measures that will promote sustainability for farms, including labor and land use policies, wetland regulations and rural broadband infrastructure.**
- 7. We advocate for state and regional policies and investment that strengthen and enable growth in Niagara County tourism.**
- 8. We advocate for workforce training and educational programs that better connect higher education, trades, upskilling and vocational schools to businesses and their future workforce needs.**
- 9. We advocate for a stronger local and regional transportation system and upgraded infrastructure to provide better transportation opportunities for those that live and work in Niagara County.**
- 10. We advocate for comprehensive reform of Niagara County's property tax environment, including timely reassessments and elimination of city and/or town homestead rules, which continue to create a competitive disadvantage for business attraction.**
- 11. We advocate for New York State to ensure fair share of aid for Upstate school districts, infrastructure, et. al.**



# Priority Issues: Policy Context & Impact

## ENERGY

### **Electrification Mandates & Energy Choice**

New York State's recent decision to delay implementation of the all-electric building mandate reflects growing recognition that prior timelines did not sufficiently account for infrastructure readiness, affordability, or regional variation. While the delay is a constructive step, it does not resolve the long-term uncertainty facing employers making capital, facility, and expansion decisions today. Businesses require clarity and predictability in energy policy to plan multi-year investments, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing, health care, logistics, and food production that rely on high-load, reliable energy systems.

The Niagara USA Chamber supports an all-options energy approach that prioritizes emissions reduction without eliminating viable energy sources. Policies should remain technology-neutral and allow market-driven solutions—including hybrid heating, renewable natural gas, weatherization, and efficiency upgrades—to contribute meaningfully to state climate goals. Continued pressure toward mandatory electrification without proven, affordable alternatives risks higher operating costs, infrastructure strain, and accelerated economic leakage from Upstate regions.

### **Climate Policy Implementation & Cost Impacts**

The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act established ambitious emissions targets, but implementation mechanisms must be evaluated against real-world economic impacts. Businesses across Niagara County are already experiencing higher energy costs, regulatory uncertainty, and limited access to affordable alternatives. When compliance pathways are unclear or excessively rigid, employers are forced to divert capital away from growth, workforce investment, and modernization.

Effective climate policy should focus on outcomes rather than prescriptive inputs. Combustion-based fuels, when paired with modern efficiency measures and emerging technologies, can contribute to emissions-reduction goals while maintaining affordability and reliability. The Chamber advocates for implementation strategies that protect energy choice, encourage private-sector innovation, and avoid unintended consequences that weaken regional competitiveness or place disproportionate burdens on small and mid-sized employers.

## **Energy Choice Act (H.R. 3699)**

The Energy Choice Act (H.R. 3699), sponsored by Representative Nick Langworthy, would prohibit state and local governments from banning specific energy sources—such as natural gas or propane—for new or existing building connections. For businesses operating across jurisdictions, this legislation addresses a growing patchwork of local restrictions that create uncertainty, compliance complexity, and uneven cost structures.

More than 200 local governments nationwide have adopted resolutions supporting energy choice, reflecting bipartisan concern about affordability and infrastructure readiness. The Niagara USA Chamber views this legislation as a necessary safeguard to ensure that energy policy decisions remain balanced, market-responsive, and grounded in economic reality. Preserving energy choice supports workforce retention, capital investment, and long-term planning for employers across Niagara County.

## **BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

### **Corporate Income Tax Stability**

New York State already ranks among the highest-cost states for doing business, driven by taxes, labor costs, and regulatory burdens. Proposals to increase the corporate income tax rate—whether broadly applied or narrowly targeted—would further disadvantage New York employers relative to neighboring states. For many businesses, especially those with multi-state footprints, even modest tax increases influence decisions related to expansion, hiring, and facility location.

The Niagara USA Chamber strongly opposes any increase to the corporate income tax rate and urges policymakers to prioritize stability and predictability in tax policy. Economic growth is best supported by maintaining competitive rates, broadening the tax base through growth, and reducing structural barriers that discourage investment. A stable tax environment is essential to retaining employers and attracting new business activity to Niagara County.

# HEALTH CARE

## **Ensuring County-Wide Access to Quality Health Care**

Access to reliable, high-quality health care is a core economic issue for Niagara County. Employers depend on a stable health care system to attract and retain talent, while residents rely on timely access to essential and emergency services. Ongoing workforce shortages, rising operational costs, and service consolidation pose risks to both access and system sustainability—particularly in rural and underserved areas of the county.

The Niagara USA Chamber advocates for policies that ensure sufficient resources, workforce support, and capital investment across Niagara County’s health care ecosystem. Maintaining geographically distributed access to care strengthens community stability, supports workforce participation, and reinforces the region’s overall economic resilience. Health care policy decisions must account for regional needs rather than applying uniform solutions that fail to reflect local realities.

## **Fair Share of Rural Health Funding**

Federal and state rural health funding programs play a critical role in sustaining access to care, yet funding structures often include restrictive requirements that limit their effectiveness. The federal **Rural Health Transformation Program** represents a significant opportunity to stabilize and strengthen care delivery, but only if funding formulas and eligibility criteria accurately reflect regional realities. Mixed urban-rural counties like Niagara—particularly communities on the eastern side of the county—risk being overlooked when programs rely on narrow population or geographic definitions that fail to capture service demand and access gaps.

The Niagara USA Chamber advocates for Niagara County to receive its fair share of funding through the Rural Health Transformation Program and similar initiatives, with flexibility built into program design and implementation. Funding models should recognize cross-county patient flows, workforce shortages, and the essential role of regional providers serving rural and semi-rural communities. Equitable distribution and practical compliance standards are essential to preserving access to care, preventing further service erosion, and supporting long-term health system sustainability across all parts of Niagara County.

## HOUSING

### **Protection and Innovation of Pro-Housing Programs**

New York State's pro-housing programs play a critical role in addressing housing shortages, supporting workforce growth, and enabling economic development across regions like Niagara County. Programs such as the Brownfield Cleanup Program, Downtown Revitalization Initiative, Pro-Housing Communities Program, Housing Acceleration Fund, and similar tools help offset development risk, attract private investment, and move projects from concept to construction. Adding additional red tape, narrowing eligibility, or slowing approvals would deter developers and homebuilders from investing in New York and push capital toward neighboring states with more predictable regulatory environments.

The Niagara USA Chamber supports protecting these existing programs while also encouraging innovation to reduce housing costs and speed delivery. The state should welcome new approaches—such as the use of mass timber, modular construction, and emerging building technologies—that lower material and construction costs without sacrificing safety or sustainability. As New York positions itself as a leader in technology and artificial intelligence, that same spirit of innovation should be applied to housing policy through collaboration with developers, builders, and local governments to address affordability and supply challenges.

## CROSS-BORDER TRADE & RELATIONSHIPS

### **Transparent Tariffs & Trade Certainty**

Niagara County's economy is deeply intertwined with Canada through trade, manufacturing supply chains, tourism, and cross-border labor activity. Sudden tariff changes or unclear trade rules create uncertainty that disproportionately affects small and mid-sized businesses with limited capacity to absorb cost shocks. Predictability in trade policy is essential for inventory planning, pricing strategies, and long-term investment decisions.

The Niagara USA Chamber advocates for transparent tariff schedules and consistent trade enforcement to provide businesses with the certainty required to operate efficiently. Clear rules reduce risk, support cross-border commerce, and reinforce the region's role as a binational economic engine. Trade policy should facilitate, not hinder, the natural economic integration that defines Western New York.

## **Adherence to USMCA Frameworks**

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) established clear parameters for North American trade, including dispute resolution, regulatory cooperation, and market access. Adherence to these frameworks is critical to maintaining confidence among businesses that rely on cross-border trade as part of their core operations. Deviations from negotiated agreements introduce uncertainty and undermine long-term planning.

The Niagara USA Chamber supports trade policies that align with the intent and structure of the USMCA and promote cooperation rather than disruption. Consistent application of agreed-upon rules strengthens regional competitiveness, supports job creation, and reinforces Niagara County's position as a gateway for international commerce. Stable U.S.-Canada relations are essential to the county's economic future.

## **GOOD GOVERNMENT**

### **Fiscal Transparency & Cost Accountability in State Legislation**

New York State lawmakers routinely advance legislation without access to full, independent cost estimates, limiting the ability of policymakers, employers, and taxpayers to understand the long-term fiscal implications of proposed laws. When bills move forward without clear price tags, the result is often unanticipated costs, unfunded mandates, and budgetary pressures that ultimately fall on businesses, local governments, and residents.

The Niagara USA Chamber supports measures that require comprehensive fiscal impact analyses prior to legislative votes. Transparent cost assessments promote informed decision-making, strengthen public trust, and improve policy outcomes by ensuring that economic impacts are understood upfront rather than addressed after enactment. Requiring clear fiscal disclosure is a common sense good-government reform that supports accountability, predictability, and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.