

## Education Section

### Basic Philosophy

*The Billings Chamber supports a business and education partnership that will prepare today's students and adult learners for the workplace. The business community is the primary consumer and beneficiary of K-20 education, both public and private. A partnership between business and education is vital in order to align academic needs with the practical needs that translate into value for the business community.*

*We encourage an education system that is connected to the community.*

*We encourage business involvement in all aspects of public education, including businesses partnering with education entities as part of the learning process.*

*We support a School Board that understands the impact their decisions have on the business community.*

*We encourage the school board to look at adding a provision for drug testing for all participants participating in any extracurricular activity.*

*We support the current Graduation Matters program or any other program which will reduce the dropout rate.*

*We support continued funding for innovation and improvement efforts related to education that assist the Billings community in attracting new business and training the existing workforce to solve specific business needs.*

*We expect area graduates to show proficiency in reading, writing, and functional math, as well as **consumer education**, critical thinking and foundational business skills. **We strongly support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)***

*We expect a workforce that is well-prepared to meet business needs, whether that is by college bound students meeting university demands or the non-college bound students achieving a proficient level of technical skill.*

*We support the need to educate and maintain a well-qualified pool of labor for current business operations, as well as new business development.*

*We support adult learning and training programs that assist with training the existing work force to expand their skill set.*

*We encourage and support economic development efforts of the University system, private or public, in coordination with private industry and other government entities.*

***We recognize and support the education community for the education and nurturing they provide to their students. Their work elevates our entire community and communities around Montana and our country.***

## **Specific Issues**

### **School District 2 Facilities**

*In order to support a growing 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, it is crucial that Billings have a first-rate public school system. Therefore, the Chamber supports strategic, cost effective investment in the infrastructure that supports public education, including proactive maintenance and revitalization of existing facilities and continuous long-range planning. The business community needs to be involved in helping the school district define, prioritize and implement its priorities.*

### **Education Primary/Secondary Funding**

*The Chamber supports quality primary and secondary education that is adequately funded and delivered efficiently. **We also support changing the funding formula at the state level to include 19 year old students.** We welcome improvements in the budgeting process, fiscal accountability, and the quality and presentation of discretionary bond issues and mill levies. In addition, the Chamber encourages public-private partnership with the School District.*

### **Consolidation of Districts/Superintendent of Schools Role**

*The Chamber supports investigating the consolidation of school districts on a statewide level and re-examining the role of the County Superintendent of Schools.*

### **School Attendance Areas**

*The Chamber supports frequent review and adjustment of the school boundaries. The Chamber also recognizes that individual school boundaries have not been addressed for a number of years. Because of the fluidity of the student population in Billings, boundaries should be readjusted as needed to alleviate overcrowding and busing while balancing class sizes among individual schools. Emphasis must be placed on neighborhood schools rather than busing, assuming cost factors are relatively equal over the long term.*

### **Magnet Schools**

*The Chamber supports the concept of magnet middle and high schools, which offer specialized curriculum, ~~highly-trained~~ **well-prepared** teachers and innovative instruction. A great example of a magnet school is our own Career Center.*

### **Dual Credits**

*The Chamber **continues to** support the dual credit program where students can attend college classes at MSUBillings, City College at Montana State University Billings, or Rocky Mountain College and receive both high school and college credit. This program has the potential to alleviate over-crowding in the high schools and increase attendance at MSUBillings, City College ~~at Montana State University Billings~~, and Rocky Mountain College.*

### **Common Core**

*The Common Core State Standards are K–12 academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. They were developed by states, and states voluntarily choose to adopt them.*

*Standards are a critical first step in improving America's education system. They provide the necessary foundation for local decisions around curriculum, assessments and instruction. The Billings Chamber supports the Common Core initiative.*

### **STEM Initiative**

*For our community, state and nation, STEM education is foundational for a globally competitive workforce in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. STEM education integrates the content and skills of science, technology, engineering and mathematics into the teaching and learning process. It equips our current students and future scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills to create new, visionary technologies and confidence to take on new frontiers. STEM-related instruction engages students in inquiry, logical reasoning, collaboration and investigation.*

### **Project Lead The Way**

*Project Lead The Way is the nation's leading provider of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs and is now part of School District 2's elementary curriculum. Through world-class K-12 curriculum, high-quality teacher professional development, and outstanding partnerships, PLTW will help students in Billings develop the skills needed to succeed in the global economy. The Chamber supports implementation of programs that promote preparing students for a global economy.*

### **Business to School Ambassadors/Partners in Education**

*The Chamber supports business to education ambassadors/partners in education program. Business ambassadors/partners would be assigned to school principals and to administrative personnel. This program helps the individual school staffs understand educational support by the business community and promotes interaction between business and education. **We also encourage and support the business community to offer internships and/or apprenticeships as a way to bridge the work gap between the education system and the business community.***

### **Financial Advice**

*The Chamber should be an integral partner regarding financial information and value judgments that become part of the school budget. We support the goals of all levels of education for numerous reasons and want to assist with delivering these services in a manner that is efficient and represents fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer. The Chamber will help to evaluate the financial information and promote understanding of the values underlying budgets of various educational institutions. **The Chamber also feels that the business community has a responsibility to fill the role for fiscal oversight regarding school budgets.***

### **School Board Elections**

*The Billings Chamber supports well-qualified school board members. The current policy of electing from single-member districts presents challenges in finding well-qualified candidates for the school board. Representing specific districts has been shown to have a divisive effect on the individual board members and district-wide issues do not receive adequate consideration. When the district elected board members at-large, there were many contested races, and candidates had to develop a platform on which they ran and take that message to the general electorate. We support returning to at-large elections. **Presently there is no enabling legislation to allow moving to some form of elections other than single-member districts. The Chamber will work to get enabling legislation passed.***

*In an effort to educate community members about the role and responsibilities of being a school board member, the Chamber has held an annual school board candidate school, and will continue to do so as long as there is a need.*

### **School Board Committees**

The Billings Chamber encourages the school district to ~~reinstate the various committees,~~ *develop and implement advisory committees such as Facilities, Long Range Planning, Common Core, Accreditation Standards, Employee Benefits and Budgets.* ~~that were in existence prior to 2011.~~ A committee structure, made up of the business community in particular, is an educational system for potential board member candidates, as well as a means for communication between the district and the business community.

### **Work Readiness Credential**

The Billings Chamber believes that a skills profile and assessment that measures the proficiency of entry level workers should be a testing mechanism that is performed while the individual is still in school. The testing should measure the individuals basic and soft skills and testing should include *but not be limited to:*

1. Situational judgment
2. *Communication Skills*
3. Read with understanding
4. Use math to solve problems

When individuals successfully complete the assessment they receive a National Work Readiness Credential as a confirmation that they have the skills to add value on the frontline in entry level workplaces.

### **Non-Traditional Educational opportunities**

*The Billings Chamber knows education does not begin or end with the traditional “school day”. We support the efforts of community-based organizations engaged in public/private partnerships, which provide school-age children with a continuum of support designed keep students in school and bridge the gap between the classroom and the work force. In addition to the daily support designed to meet students basic physical, emotional and academic needs, these organizations provide intentional programs designed to expose students to the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), and activities which will create enthusiasm and assist students with developing goals and planning to secure employment in a STEM related career.*

### **Post Secondary Education Faculty/Funding**

The Chamber supports a quality system of higher education. To ensure academic excellence, the Chamber supports the development of any mechanism that will enable the universities to attract and retain outstanding faculty. The Chamber supports expanding incentives.

### **Post Secondary Education Interface with Healthcare**

The Chamber supports ~~the need to~~ *strengthening* the stature of higher education in Billings through collaboration with our local healthcare industry and business community.

- *Bioscience Research and Development*

*There is great potential in local economic development involving bioscience research and development. Beginning with the Career Center students, collaboration between the healthcare industry with Rocky Mountain College, City College at Montana State University Billings and Montana State University Billings is particularly essential to success in this area.*

- *Workforce Needs and Shortages*

There are many shortages right now in the field ~~of healthcare at all levels of nursing, and ancillary healthcare~~. Higher education is critical in providing education, training, and opportunities for degree advancement.

- **Higher-education collaboration**  
Collaboration between Montana's higher education institutions and businesses ~~will~~ **benefits** consumers of healthcare services, our local economy and employees. Strengthening the stature of higher education in Billings will assist the healthcare industry in recruiting and retaining physicians and other healthcare professionals.

### **Post Secondary Education Interface with Business**

The Chamber encourages the continuation and expansion of dialogue and cooperative ventures between higher education and private businesses that address workforce training needs and shortages ~~and promote~~ while promoting partnerships for business opportunities.

### ~~**Post Secondary Education Transfer Credit Applicability**~~

~~The Chamber recommends that the Montana University system assure sustainability of the Transferability Initiative that has been accomplished and is in effect.~~

### **Post Secondary Education Facilities**

The Chamber supports continuation of a formal long-range capital building plan for the University system. Montana State University-Billings is an integral part of our community and investment in its infrastructure is critical to its continuation. We support the acquisition of additional land where needed to ensure orderly long term growth.

### **Six-mill Post Secondary Education Statewide Funding**

Until a better alternative is found, the Chamber supports funding of the six-mill levy for higher education.

### ~~**Advanced Degree Options for Loan Assistance/Repayment**~~

~~The Chamber realizes that advanced degree students usually leave the education system with very substantial outstanding student loans. The Chamber supports programs offered in the public or private sectors that have a program for local repayment or forgiveness if the student stays employed in Montana.~~