



Rep. Amy Elik Supports Illinois Manufacturers' Plan to Strengthen Workforce

by Chris Guy

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SPRINGFIELD - Illinois State Representative Amy Elik (R-Alton) joined the Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA) in support of its 2024 legislative agenda, advocating for measures to strengthen the state's manufacturing ecosystem by supporting students and families entering the workforce.

"I'm proud to partner with the Illinois Manufacturers' Association on these important issues concerning career training education and increasing access to childcare," said Rep. Amy Elik. "Illinois must continue to explore ways to build career pathways for students and remove barriers that make it difficult for students and parents to enter the workforce."

A bipartisan measure (HB 3307) sponsored by Rep. Amy Elik would allow students to take two years of career training education in place of two years of foreign language study.

An additional measure sponsored by Rep. Amy Elik would create a pilot program (HB 4670) to allow 10 manufacturers to open on-site childcare centers at no cost to their employees. The employer is required to follow staffing, medication, background checks, and liability insurance requirements through an expedited approval process. The IMA is also seeking to bring grant dollars/incentives to employers who open childcare centers in designated childcare deserts.

Rep. Amy Elik added, "The lack of available childcare is a hindrance to attracting and keeping people, especially women, in the workforce. We believe that this pilot program

is very unique, but it will be a way for employers to provide a key benefit to their employees and to bring more people to the workforce, which improves manufacturing in Illinois for decades to come.”

Manufacturing is the largest contributor of any industry to the state’s Gross Domestic Product, supporting nearly a third of all jobs in Illinois and contributing more than \$580 billion to the state’s economy each year. For continued growth, lawmakers must adopt policies that make it easier for manufacturers to hire and retain qualified workers and encourage businesses to invest in new technologies that can revolutionize the world. To advance these goals, the IMA recently partnered with members of the General Assembly to form a new bipartisan and bicameral Illinois Manufacturing Caucus, which will focus on issues that impact the industry. State Representative Amy Elik serves as co-chair of the Illinois Manufacturing Caucus.

“Illinois has a proud manufacturing history, but we cannot rest on our laurels as other states implement policies that incentivize manufacturers to locate outside of our borders,” said Mark Denzler, President & CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association. “We must harness our talent to build a workforce of the future and embrace technology that is poised to solve some of the world’s most pressing challenges. Manufacturers across Illinois look forward to working collaboratively with lawmakers to get the job done.”

Nationally, there are 625,000 open jobs in the manufacturing industry, including tens of thousands of available jobs in Illinois. The IMA is dedicated to working with employers, educators and lawmakers to enact policies that help attract, retain and grow a skilled workforce. This includes the creation a Student Loan Employer Tax Credit, which would provide employers with a tax credit if they help pay student loan debt of their employees; a new Manufacturing Promise Scholarship Program to provide high school students with free community college education if they are enrolled in a manufacturing pathway; a pilot program that would allow a select number of manufacturers to open free, on-site, employee-only childcare centers; and, updated high school graduation requirements that would substitute two years of Career and Technical Education courses in place of the current two-year foreign language requirement.

“As manufacturers across Illinois seek to fill open positions, it’s important we work collaboratively with employers, educators and policy makers to find solutions to our workforce challenges. This includes supporting students through their educational journey and removing barriers that prevent employees from entering the workforce, including a lack of childcare,” said Sarah Hartwick, Vice President of Education & Workforce Policy and Executive Director of the IMA’s Education Foundation.

The Illinois Manufacturers' Association is the only statewide association dedicated exclusively to advocating, promoting, and strengthening the manufacturing sector in Illinois. The IMA is the oldest and largest state manufacturing trade association in the United States, representing nearly 4,000 companies and facilities.

Stay up to date on news and legislative action in the Illinois House of Representatives by visiting RepElik.com or contact Rep. Amy Elik's district office in Alton at 618-433-8046.

****Pictured from left to right at the Illinois Manufacturers' Association Press Conference on Wednesday, February 7 include: Sen. Karina Villa, Sen. Don DeWitte, IMA President Mark Denzler, Sen. Meg Loughran Cappel, and Rep. Amy Elik.***