

2021 **KNOXVILLE CHAMBER** LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

To ensure the region's ability to educate, recruit and maintain a skilled workforce, we will:

- Promote continued implementation of the TNReady standards and assessments to ensure accurate and timely information is provided to educators, families, and the wider community regarding students' preparation for continued learning and success in the workforce.
- Advocate for increased funding of Knox County Schools, particularly to address learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of Internet access and to eliminate disparities among socioeconomic groups.
- Support processes and policies to ensure funds allotted to the state and region through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are administered equitably, efficiently, and creatively by a high-performing regional workforce investment board.
- Advocate for full funding of the formula for community colleges as proposed by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. These funds are critical to community colleges' ability to deliver their mission of workforce training for the region.
- Support creation of a funding pool for short-term workforce training and certification for those individuals not currently eligible for financial aid.
- Seek to increase access to quality, affordable childcare.
- Support efforts to preserve Tennessee's reputation as a welcoming state by opposing discriminatory legislation that hinders its reputation and negatively impacts the economy, jobs and the ability to attract talent.

To ensure the region has the infrastructure needed to support a growing population to maintain an enviable quality of life and drive economic prosperity, we will:

- Champion efforts at the local, state and federal level to increase investment in wired and wireless broadband networks to improve education, medical care and economic opportunities for all Tennesseans.
- Advocate for a long-term solution to alleviate growing congestion on I-40/I-75 through Knoxville, which may include construction of a tractor-trailer bypass.
- Support incentive-based programs and policies that promote housing affordability in the region.

To create a healthy ecosystem for entrepreneurial growth and be a positive influence on the economic mobility of communities where disparities exist, we will:

- Champion restoring state matching funds for award recipients of the federal Small Business Innovation (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.
- Advocate for allowing local governments to identify business license applications where the applicant has self-identified as a minority owner, where upon verification, allows for the delivery of targeted resources aimed at eliminating disparities.
- Seek to create additional opportunities and improve access to early-stage and working capital — particularly for small and minority-owned businesses statewide.

To maintain a business climate that is conducive to growing businesses, as well as attracting and retaining talent, we will:

- Support initiatives that increase access and affordability of medical care - including prevention and treatment of substance abuse and addiction; to provide a healthier workforce and to alleviate health care costs to businesses.
- Seek to make permanent state law that requires reimbursement of telehealth services at the same rate as in-person services as a method to expand delivery of medical services and close disparities in access to health care.

