

2024 **KNOXVILLE CHAMBER** AGENDA TO DRIVE REGIONAL ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Guided by its mission of driving regional economic prosperity, the Chamber gives thoughtful consideration to issues being debated at the local, state and federal level. The Chamber uses this document to guide how the organization evaluates legislation, policy and regulations that could drive – or stifle – regional economic prosperity.

We work closely with elected officials, policy makers and other advocacy groups to identify legislation that relates to these core values and evaluate advocacy positions. These statements do not restrict or confine our advocacy work or larger mission. Instead, it drives and empowers our efforts in a disruptive economy as organizations reinvent and adjust to changing circumstances.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Safeguard local governments' ability to promote economic development, as well as affordable and workforce housing, through public/private partnerships and incentives, including TIFs, PILOTs, and Housing Tax Credits.
- Support state and local business incentives and tools that make Tennessee competitive with others states while emphasizing transparency, accountability, and a return on investment.
- Oppose administrative efforts to interpret the tax code as to create new financial burdens aimed solely at the business sector.

HEALTH CARE:

- 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.
- Support reforms to the Medicare Area Wage Index provisions that have driven down Tennessee reimbursement rates and impedes providers' abilities to recruit and retain medical professionals.
- Support state-sponsored trade schools that include paths for healthcare fields.

TALENT

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

- Support expansion of high-quality early education programs.
- 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.
- Support an accountability model for Tennessee school systems that include seamless pathways and measure of quality career and technical education, including industry-recognized certifications, work-based learning, dual enrollment, and expanded post-secondary opportunities.
- Support the use of student assessments as a factor used in evaluating educators' effectiveness, with few exceptions.
- Support efforts intended to enhance the preparation, recruitment, and retention of high-quality teachers.
- Preserve the current system for selecting school superintendents, in which these leaders are appointed by an elected school board to ensure a clear and accountable governance structure.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:

- Support in-state tuition for all Tennessee residents who have attended a Tennessee high school for at least two years and received a diploma.
- Support efforts to expand college access and affordability for all Tennesseans, including funding for short-term training that meets the region's specific workforce demands.
- Expand Tennessee Promise/Reconnect eligibility for designated private technical education programs with high graduation and employment placement rates that provide the skills and education for students to successfully enter the job market and to expand the workforce for employers.
- Support employer-led earn and learn opportunities, including internships and apprenticeships.
- 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.

TALENT ATTRACTION & RETENTION:

- 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.
- Support a comprehensive solution to address the United States' immigration system and ensure that it protects our borders, provides a pathway toward earned citizenship, and allows the United States to attract and keep the world's most talented workforce.
- Increase access to quality, affordable childcare.

INFRASTRUCTURE

MOVEMENT:

- Maintain Tennessee's pay-as-you-go strategy to build and maintain roads and bridges.
- Identify and implement solutions for long-term transportation funding to cover maintenance needs, as well as current and new projects, identified by TDOT and regional planning organizations.
- 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 legislation and other measures that enable local governments to implement dedicated funding sources for transportation.
- Advocate for the better utilization of public transportation to focus on routes that connect residents to employment centers.
- Oppose efforts to restrict the use of gas tax revenues by cities and counties, preventing creative, multi-modal solutions to transportation issues.
- Support efforts to increase the capacity of and expand and upgrade the infrastructure of electrical utilities to meet growing demands of electric vehicles in an equitable manner to all taxpayers.

- Support efforts to recruit air carriers and additional flights to and from key markets out to McGhee Tyson Airport and continue support for capital improvements at the airport to support the future needs of the region.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT:

- Support clear and predictable planning and zoning policies, as well as timely regulatory processes, that promote economic growth.
- Support incentive-based programs and policies that promote housing affordability in the region.
- Support efforts at the local, state, and federal level to increase investment in wired and wireless networks, as well as efforts to improve digital literacy, to improve education, medical care, and economic opportunities for all Tennesseans.
- Ensure water and sewer infrastructure is maintained and expanded to accommodate a growing population and economic development opportunities.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP/SMALL BUSINESS

- Create additional opportunities and improve access to early-stage and working capital — particularly for small, women- and minority-businesses statewide.
- Advocate for continued state matching funds for award recipients of the federal Small Business Innovation (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.
- Increase the availability of capital by leveraging funding sources to invest in technology-based firms to foster innovation and the creation of high-skilled, high-paying jobs.
- Increase access to capital for entrepreneurs and start-ups, particularly those aligned with business and scientific assets in the region.

