

2024 REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

For three decades the Chambers of Commerce of **Oak Ridge**, **Blount County** and **Knoxville** have worked together to develop a regional legislative agenda to identify state issues of importance and increase job and business growth in the region. In 2021, the **Farragut West**, **Knox** and **Anderson County** Chambers of Commerce joined this initiative. The following items will be the primary focus of this joint effort, with a specific emphasis on points affecting the most currently critical issues of **Workforce**, **Housing**, and **Childcare**.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To attract, retain, and expand business in our region, we:

- Support local governments' continued ability to promote economic development and affordable housing through public/private partnerships (TIF, PILOT, and Housing Tax Credits) and encourage the State of Tennessee to enhance these efforts.
- Support the enhancement of infrastructure and training incentives, and the establishment of technology-driven incentives to recruit and retain high-skilled high-wage jobs that further the region's reputation for innovation.
- Advocate for McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base to receive and deploy the K-46 Pegasus refueling aircraft, and its associated Air Force personnel, to capitalize on recent investments at the base.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

To ensure a high-quality, capable workforce in the future, we:

- Encourage the State of Tennessee to implement an initiative to attract skilled and educated workers to our State to meet the needs of our existing and future employers.
- Support an accountability model for Tennessee school systems that includes seamless pathways and a measure of quality career and technical education, including industry-recognized certifications, work-based learning, dual enrollment, and expanding post-secondary opportunities, to help reach the state's goal of 55 percent of Tennesseans by 2025 holding post-secondary credentials.
- 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.
- Oppose any state action that would result in mandating the election of school system superintendents.
- 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 the East Tennessee Local Workforce Development Board.

HEALTH CARE

To encourage a healthy workforce, we:

- Support health policies, particularly those addressing mental health, youth substance abuse prevention, substance misuse, abuse, and addiction, which improve the welfare of the state's workforce.
- Increase the pipeline of health care workforce by supporting Work in Tennessee initiatives, including an emphasis on growing workforce numbers in the mental health sector.
- Support state-sponsored trade schools that include paths for healthcare fields.
- Support increase in the Medicare-wage index to raise pay of health care workers in the Knoxville area.

CHILDCARE

Because the lack of childcare is impeding our workforce, resulting in lost earnings and revenue of \$2.3 billion in Tennessee, we seek to:

- Support efforts that increase access to quality and affordable childcare by incentivizing businesses to co-invest in childcare with their employees and/or community, including through business tax credits.
- Strengthen the early childhood education workforce by reexamining requirements to become a preschool teacher and recognizing credentials from other states.
- Increase the reimbursement rate for childcare vouchers to individuals in need to reflect the true cost of care.
- Make high-quality pre-K an option for more families and develop a mixed delivery system to optimize parental choice.

INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

To provide the infrastructure needed for economic growth, we:

- Support continued efforts at the local, state, and federal level to increase investment in wired and wireless broadband networks, as well as efforts to improve digital literacy, to improve education, medical care, and economic opportunities for all Tennesseans.
- Support short- and long-term solutions for interstate congestion and regional arterials that ensure connectivity and mobility for commuters, deliverers of goods, and tourists.
- Support efforts to ensure water, sewer, and gas infrastructure is maintained and expanded to accommodate a growing population and economic development opportunities.
- 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 of McGhee Tyson Airport and continue support for capital improvements at the airport to support the future needs of air travel in East Tennessee.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SMALL BUSINESS

To create a healthy ecosystem for business start-ups, growth, and longevity, we:

- 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.