



2021 ADVOCACY AGENDA FOR RECOVERY & EQUITY

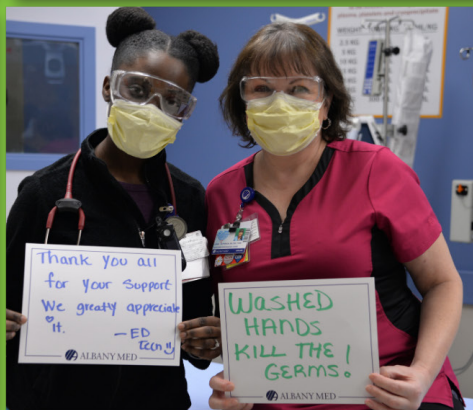
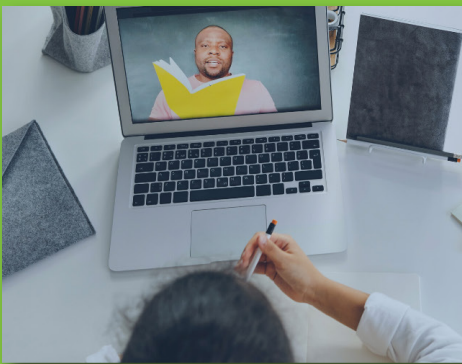
We faced multiple crises in 2020 - a global pandemic, an economic recession, and unrest over racial equity and justice.

The Capital Region Chamber has and will advance ideas, policies, and opportunities to help make our region more competitive, lead to job creation, and allow for prosperity for all.

Our advocacy, at all levels of government, will focus on driving recovery and equity to best position all citizens, businesses, and our region to recover and ultimately thrive post-pandemic.

These are truly challenging times; however, we'll face them together, provide clarity and a rational voice, as we seek to unite our decision makers under the common goal of overcoming these challenges. Our Chamber's mission is "to be a unifying force for change to provide greater influence and opportunities for our members and our Capital Region communities." Never has our mission been more relevant, nor more clear.

We will face these challenges united with one voice, with one mission for one region.



RECOVERY

COVID-19 has impacted our lives and livelihoods in ways both readily apparent and yet to be seen. From stay-at-home orders, to remote learning, to wearing masks and social distancing, almost every facet of our economy and daily lives have been touched by this virus. While federal stimulus has helped many, the stability of many for-profit and non-profit businesses, and local governments remain in peril.

The Capital Region Chamber will be a strong advocate for financial and mandate relief. Recovery will require New York State and local governments to be responsible stewards of finances and reduce regulatory and tax burdens.

Lawmakers must enact public policy and programs that will accelerate economic recovery. They must avoid attempts to impose statewide policies that may work in the Downstate area but may have a negative impact on Upstate. They must also avoid raising revenue through ever increasing taxes and fees and spending well beyond what is fiscally prudent. Government leaders must adopt policies that will grow our economy and create jobs to stimulate a swift recovery.

We will advocate for federal COVID-19 related financial assistance;

In order to help sustain small businesses which have been particularly hard hit during the pandemic, we will advocate for a permanent and broad personal income tax reduction for small businesses;

We will advocate for increasing state and local procurement from small businesses;
We will advocate for creating jobs by investing in Upstate's aging roads and bridges, and ensuring Upstate/Downstate regional parity to address critical infrastructure needs;

In order to reduce the cost of construction and infrastructure projects in Upstate, we will advocate for a 5-year moratorium on the Scaffold Law. This would save taxpayers \$785 million annually;

The pandemic has reinforced the important role childcare plays in creating a stable economy. Parents cannot return to work without access to safe, affordable childcare. We will advocate for policies and increased funding to expand access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education and early childcare programs;

We will advocate for workforce and training programs to assist workers that have been displaced by the pandemic in developing new skills to return to the labor force;

In order to protect businesses from unwarranted lawsuits related to the pandemic, the federal and state governments must provide liability relief to businesses that make good-faith efforts to follow applicable public health guidelines;

Community based non-profit organizations play a significant role in providing much needed resources to our region during the pandemic and are essential to our region's economic recovery. Their finances have been severely strained. We will advocate for regulatory reforms that reduce the unfunded mandates on non-profit organizations;

Our region's hotels, restaurants and visitor attractions continue to operate at extremely low capacity as a result of the pandemic. We will advocate for policies and financial relief that assist the restaurant, tourism and hospitality sectors recover from the aftermath of the pandemic;

Our performing arts venues have been in large part closed during the pandemic. We will advocate for funding that sustain them now to best position them for reopening;

The severe reduction in commerce has dramatically reduced the sales tax revenue collected by local governments. We support the federal and state governments providing appropriate financial assistance to municipal governments;

The pandemic has made it abundantly clear that health care is vitally important. We support affordable access to health insurance and a robust healthcare system without imposing new mandates and/or taxes on businesses or individuals.

EQUITY

Unrest exposed the great inequity that still exists in our society. It's apparent how far we still have to go to ensure that every person can fully realize opportunity and justice.

We have a responsibility as a business community to do more. Everyone in the Capital Region has the right to quality education, to earning a living with equal access, and share in our regional economic prosperity. Change is possible and we are capable, but it is going to take intentional, actionable strides by all of us.

The Capital Region Chamber will champion policies and programs that address disparities to improve economic inclusion.

We will advocate for workforce development initiatives that build diverse talent that is inclusive of people that have been traditionally disenfranchised;

We will advocate for improvements to the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) certification and recertification process;

We will advocate for policies that improve access to capital for minority-owned businesses;

We will advocate for policies that remove key barriers to securing gainful employment for those who have been convicted of low-level, nonviolent felony offenses and who want to be productive and contributing citizens;

We will advocate for school funding that is fair and equitable to all school districts and produces relief to taxpayers. Today, some school districts receive more than 100% of what the State aid formula suggests, while other districts receive far less. This inequitable distribution of school aid most often negatively impacts urban school districts;

We will advocate for education policies that eliminate the gaps in access to advance courses and opportunity that hold too many students back from a bright future and from the state achieving its economic potential. We specifically support and are committed to these five principles and the steps that must be taken to fulfill each:

- ▶ All students, families, and educators will have accurate and timely information, support, and help to access a rich and robust course experience in their school. How: Leverage the state's new accountability system to enhance transparency and implement school improvement strategies that support equitable access to rigorous courses;

- ▶ All students and families will have the information and support to pursue rigorous college and career-prep pathways. How: Require that families receive better information and expand access to school counselors and other resources;
- ▶ Every student will receive rich and rigorous instruction that prepares them for success after high school graduation. How: Establish a default college- and career-prep course sequence that all students are automatically enrolled in, backed by high expectations and support for educators and students;
- ▶ Every student will be able to earn college credit and/or participate in work-based learning opportunities before they graduate from high school. How: Expand access to AP, 1B, dual enrollment courses, proven programs like
- ▶ P-TECH, and employer-based internships and other connections to colleges and employers;
- ▶ High school graduation requirements will match modern-day expectations for college, career, and civic readiness. How: Update course requirements for high school graduation, including by adding a fourth year of math;

COVID-19 has made clear the necessity and inequalities of broadband access. We will advocate for Congress to develop a national broadband strategy and work in coordination with states and local governments to address funding and permitting. These efforts must be in coordination and partnership with the private sector. Policy makers must stop looking at broadband as a means to an end, namely, to generate revenues, rather than as an end in itself. Siting policies to build broadband infrastructure must be reformed to minimize delays, requirements, and fees.



While recovery and equity are the core focus during 2021 legislative session, your Chamber will continue to advocate on other issues. Please click [Where We Stand](#) for a complete list of public policy positions.

The Capital Region Chamber is non-partisan and issue focused. This agenda provides a framework for the Chamber's advocacy work and can be added to during the year as needed.

In a time of so much uncertainty, let there be no question where the Capital Region Chamber stands: We stand as a champion for the free enterprise system, the most effective and proven way to create widespread opportunity.

To help us advocate or to discuss any issue, large or small at local, state or federal level, please contact Tom O'Connor, Vice President Government Relations, at 518.431.1413 or toconnor@capitalregionchamber.com.

**UNITED TO DRIVE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY WITH
ONE VOICE, ONE MISSION, ONE REGION**