

2022 ADVOCACY AGENDA FOR PROSPERITY



After a period of unprecedented challenges, there is great opportunity. The Capital Region possesses both the capacity and willingness to act. Our Chamber's advocacy, at all levels of government, will be focused on driving recovery to best position our region, our businesses, and our citizens to thrive post-pandemic.

Your Chamber will advance ideas, policies and projects that will make our region more competitive, lead to job creation, and allow for shared prosperity for all who call the Capital Region home.

The Capital Region Chamber is non-partisan and issue focused. This agenda lays out where we stand on public policy issues. It provides a framework for the Chamber's advocacy work and can be added to during the year as needed.

As we build a brighter future, let there be no question where the Capital Region Chamber stands: business and the free enterprise system is the most effective and proven way to create widespread opportunity and prosperity.

It is our honor to work with you and on your behalf. To help advocate, or discuss any public policy issues, large or small, please contact Tom O'Connor, Vice President, Government Relations at 518.431.1413 or toconnor@capitalregionchamber.com



WHERE WE STAND

TAXES/ GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS/ REGULATIONS

The Capital Region and New York State can become more competitive through mandate relief, responsible stewardship of local finances, and reducing significant state and local regulatory and tax burdens. The Chamber supports policies and strategies that improve our region's competitiveness and enhance economic growth and broad-based prosperity.

Support broad-based tax reform:

- ▶ Support efforts by the state to provide municipal governments with meaningful mandate relief. It is an absolute necessity to provide municipal governments with appropriate state aid and mandate relief.
- ▶ Support the reduction of burdensome, outdated, and complex business taxes.
- ▶ Support a permanent and broad personal income tax reduction to provide relief and help sustain small businesses.

Support reforms that will make New York State cost structure more competitive with other states to assist employers in attracting and retaining talent.

Support efforts to address the current Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund deficit and ensure that UI tax rate increases are not imposed on employers.

Support legislation that would require that any new state-mandated programs imposed on municipalities and school districts be fully funded by the state.

Support increasing state and local procurement from small businesses.

Support policies that foster the viability and sustainability of family-owned farms.

Support regulatory reforms that reduce the unfunded mandates on non-profit organizations.

Oppose the continued decrement of the statutory cost of living adjustment (COLA) that exists for many non-profit funding sources.

Support a 5-year moratorium on the Scaffold Law to reduce the cost of construction and infrastructure projects in Upstate. This would save taxpayers \$785 million annually.

Support amendments to the "Housing Stability and Tenant Protection act of 2019" (Universal Rent Control) that reduces and eliminates burdens on responsible landlords.

Support legislation that provides the Office of the State Comptroller with the authority to audit all state-funded economic development initiatives.

Oppose state legislation that would institute net neutrality, as this is a federal issue and Congress should pass legislation that provides commonly agreed upon net neutrality protections.

Oppose government mandates that require electric vehicle charging stations in private parking lots.



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WHERE WE STAND

EDUCATION/ WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A strong and aligned education system and proven workforce development programs are critical so learners from pre-kindergarten to adult have access to quality education and skill development to be lifelong learners and economically secure citizens. The Chamber supports policies that support a robust and inclusive education/workforce pipeline.

We support early childhood development programs, education policies, school funding, and talent development initiatives that are available to all students and workers at all levels so that they are ready to enter and re-enter the job market.

Support policies and programs for reskilling to align employee skills to business needs.

Support pathways for in-demand careers that require less than a college degree and provide financial assistance when needed to help people access credentialing and other earn when you learn programs.

Support initiatives that promote economic mobility, address systemic inequities, and remove barriers to education, training, and employment.

Oppose legislation that limit access to global talent for regional employers.

Support education polices that eliminate the gaps in access to advanced courses and opportunities 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, IB, 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.



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WHERE WE STAND

**EDUCATION/
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Support K-12 education models that better prepare students for entry into career and/or college:

- ▶ Support efforts to improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education.
- ▶ Support efforts to better prepare students for careers in healthcare and long term care.
- ▶ Support expanded access to innovative education models and multiple pathways to graduation.
- ▶ Continued support for Capital Region P-TECH is essential.

Support higher standards for education and assessments.

Support policies and initiatives to ensure quality, assessable and equitable early childhood education.

Support teacher quality and retention initiatives. Support evaluating the publicly funded employment and training system to better align resources for employers and job seekers. This must include a standardized system of assessment and accountability.

Support funding for the University at Albany's renovation of the Schuyler Building to become the home of UAlbany's new engineering college.



WHERE WE STAND

Economic growth is essential for a prosperous Capital Region. The Chamber advocates for policies that help existing businesses grow and attract new businesses that create new jobs.

Support policies that strengthen the Capital Region's core industry sectors: advanced electronics/semiconductors, biotech/life sciences, clean energy/offshore wind, digital gaming, and information technology.

Support continued funding and buildout of the new Wadsworth Laboratory Center.

Support our military installations and their significance to the overall well-being of the Capital Region, all of which impact our global, national, state, and regional security and economy.

Support policies that promote the growth of the tourism/hospitality sector to expand economic opportunities.

Support policies that encourage the sharing economy and gig economy and ensure New York State's competitiveness in this innovative marketplace.

Support policies that foster the creative economy and advocate for a digital gaming media production tax credit.

Support efforts to modernize the industrial development agencies (IDAs) statute to align with 21st century economic development strategies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support a broad-based approach to economic development and community projects, as well as a balance between environmentally responsible measures, and commercial and recreational uses.

Advocate for a streamlined and uniform process for the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) certification and recertification process.

Advocate for policies that improve access to capital for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) owned businesses.

Support integrated policies that support urban redevelopment, including transit and mobility options that include bike and pedestrian enhancements.

Support enhanced historic rehabilitation tax credits and continued investment and innovation in our region's downtowns.

Support the extension of and reforms to the brownfield program to expedite review and approval of remediation projects.

Support an asbestos remediation tax credit to promote the redevelopment and reuse of existing underutilized properties.

Support repurposing of the former Central Warehouse Cold Storage Building.



WHERE WE STAND

EMPLOYMENT

Growing private sector jobs is key to the Capital Region's economic future. The Chamber believes employers are best suited to determine the terms and conditions of employment based on mutual benefits, their financial condition and competitive position. We must encourage state and federal governments to pursue pro-employment policies.

Support policies that remove barriers to hiring and advancement for people who experience inequities.

Support policies and initiative to increase affordable access to quality childcare.

Support criminal justice reform that reduces recidivism, provides safer communities, expands our talent pipeline, limits obstacles to employment, and saves taxpayer dollars.

We will advocate for “second chance” hiring 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.

Support programs that assist veterans and disabled veterans with business ownership and employment opportunities.

Support cap increases and other reforms to employment-based visa programs to provide employers with the ability to meet their current and future workforce needs.

Oppose efforts to prohibit employers from using consumer credit reports in hiring and employment decisions.

Oppose efforts to regulate or prohibit employers' use of on-call scheduling of employees.



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WHERE WE STAND

Infrastructure is an important asset for all businesses, employees, and residents. Without proper investment, our economic stability, potential for job growth and competitiveness are threatened. The Chamber supports continued investment in our transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure. Those that live and work in the region should have access to an integrated mobility system that connects our entire region.

Support investing in Upstate's aging roads and bridges and ensuring upstate/downstate regional parity to address critical infrastructure needs.

Support funding for highway and bridge improvements.

Support funding for increased public transit services.

Support funding for improved sidewalks and biking paths.

Support funding to increase mobility options available in the region, to include flexible, on-demand services for bicycles, scooters and car-sharing.

Support expansion of CDTA's Bus Plus (Bus Rapid Transit).

Support efforts to integrate our public transit, taxi, ridesharing, bike-sharing and other mobility services.

Support increased frequency and improved reliability of Amtrak rail service.

Support continued investment in our aging water and sewer infrastructure.

TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE

Support improved access to and across the Hudson River in downtown Albany.

Oppose efforts to shift the cost of MTA capital improvements onto utilities and their customers. MTA must take responsibility for these improvements and must ensure that costs are properly controlled.

Support funding for continued improvements at the Port of Albany and the Port of Coeymans. As shippers look to increase their use of East Coast ports, it is critical that improvements be made at our ports to further attract the shipping industry and strengthen our supply chain.

Support and ensure the continued upstate/downstate parity in state investments in transportation infrastructure.

Support re-imagined uses for the New York State Canal System:

- ▶ Support traditional and modern commercial transportation options.
- ▶ Support enhanced recreational uses.
- ▶ Support environmentally responsible industrial, commercial, and recreational uses for the Canal's shores, including the prudent use of state-owned land and assets along the Canal system to support the economically challenged Canal communities.
- ▶ Support the lengthening of the Canal's navigation season and support maintaining the Canal's proper depth.



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WHERE WE STAND



HEALTHCARE

As healthcare costs rise, many employers and working families continue to experience difficulties finding coverage. The Chamber supports policies that promote affordable access to health insurance and a robust healthcare system without imposing new mandates and taxes.

Support universal healthcare coverage; oppose implementation of government-run, single payer healthcare.

Support market-driven solutions to control growth in healthcare costs, without imposing new mandates and/or taxes on businesses or individuals.

Support the reinstatement of the Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission. This commission would provide lawmakers with a cost and efficacy analysis prior to a vote on health insurance mandates.

Support reforming the medical tort system to make costs more affordable and predictable.

Oppose any additional health insurance tax to sustain New York State's Health Exchange.



WHERE WE STAND

ENERGY

New York State consumers pay some of the highest energy prices in the nation. Physical limitations in bringing electricity to the Capital Region from power producers outside of our region are creating congestion that is driving up costs significantly. The Chamber supports policies that promote access to affordable and reliable energy, protect energy consumers, and produce meaningful environmental progress.

Support upgrading the state's high-voltage electric transmission system in a manner consistent with competitive wholesale energy markets to make pricing more competitive in upstate communities.

Support development of offshore wind manufacturing at the Port of Albany and Port of Coeymans.

Support policies that allow for the development of natural gas infrastructure and expand access to natural gas for consumers and businesses.

Support policies that allow for the development of renewable energy sources.

Support smart city and green initiatives in the Capital Region.



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WHERE WE STAND

**GOVERNMENT
ACCOUNTABILITY**

The public has a right to be served by a government that is accountable, responsive, and transparent. Process matters. All too often, significant policy decisions are made by a select few, behind closed doors during budget negotiations. This allows for little public review and input.

Oppose the inclusion of substantive policy issues in the Budget. Policy issues should be submitted as stand-alone bills, debated and subject to public hearings and public comment.

Budgetary matters that have a substantial effect on taxpayers should be published at least 10 days in advance of any vote so that the taxpayers and legislators will have ample time to review its impact on the taxpayers. All legislators must have the opportunity to read the proposed budget to their satisfaction before being required to vote either in favor or against it.

Oppose the use of Messages of Necessity for Budget Bills. A Message of Necessity allows the Governor, Senate and Assembly to bypass the three-day waiting period between when a bill is introduced and when it can be put to a vote. Its function is to address a situation that requires immediate attention. Far too often, these messages are used to avoid proper debate, public review, and comment. These messages should only be used for their intended purpose: situations that require immediate action.

Funding for non-profits should continue even if the budget is not passed by April 1. Any budgetary changes would be adjusted from funds already paid to those non-profits if they were to continue with funding post April 1st, otherwise funds would need to be repaid if they were not supported in the then-passed new budget.

Executive Orders should be limited in nature and should not be used to bypass policy issues that should more appropriately be addressed by the legislature.



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

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