

2024 ADVOCACY AGENDA FOR PROSPERITY



The Capital Region Chamber advocates for a thriving community.

Thriving communities don't just happen. Rather they are the result of smart planning, collaboration, and dedication to driving solutions.

Our Chamber's advocacy, at all levels of government, is focused on making our region more competitive so that businesses and area residents can truly thrive.

This Advocacy Agenda reflects positions and priorities of the Chamber for this legislative session. It contains new pro-jobs issue areas, along with several policies that will be familiar from prior years. Your Chamber is laser focused on creating a prosperous region that provides access to opportunity to all.

Whether directly or indirectly, decisions that are made at the local, state, and federal levels of government have an impact on you and your organization. Your business has and advocate that speaks your language. We will actively monitor hundreds of bills this legislative session. The Chamber's reputation and influence will be at work to protect and promote the interests of the Capital Region.

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 advocates for policies and strategies that improve our region's competitiveness and enhance economic growth and broad-based prosperity.

Advocate for efforts to address the current

Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund deficit and ensure that UI tax rate increases are not imposed on employers. New York State must commit at least \$2 billion to pay down the state's outstanding debt. The state must also fund any interest payments due on its loan from the federal government.

Advocate for broad-based tax reform:

- ▶ Advocate for 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.
- ▶ Advocate for the reduction of burdensome, outdated, and complex business taxes.
- ▶ Advocate for a permanent and broad personal income tax reduction to provide relief and help sustain small businesses.

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

Advocate against legislation that would undermine recent reforms to the Workers' Compensation system and would drive up premiums for employers.

Advocate against regulations and/or divestments that impede legitimate business enterprises.

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

Advocate for increasing state and local procurement from small businesses.

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

Advocate for legislation that reinstates the 60-hour overtime threshold for farm laborers.

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

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

Advocate for reforming the Scaffold Law to reduce the cost of construction and infrastructure projects in Upstate. This would save taxpayers \$785 million annually.

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

Advocate against 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.

Advocate against attempts to change New York's antitrust law into a tool to steer market outcomes and thereby harm New York State consumers.

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

Advocate for the discontinuation of the state's mandated Covid-19 paid sick leave.



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 advocates for policies that support a robust and inclusive education/workforce pipeline.

We advocate for 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.

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

Advocate for 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.

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

Advocate against legislation that limits access to global talent for regional employers.

Advocate for funding to support BOCES and community college programs, as well as the Workforce Development Boards to allow individuals to acquire the skills they need to succeed at work and businesses finding qualified employees. We must ensure that area citizens of all interests, talents and abilities can pursue credential programs, traditional trades, and licensed professions, as well as other skill development programs, thereby strengthening the workforce pipeline that is desperately needed by employers. The funding required can be offset by the increased tax revenue that will be generated by business expansion and job growth.

Advocate for education policies that support all students. We specifically advocate for and are committed to these four principles and the steps that must be taken to fulfill each:

- ▶ 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.

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

- ▶ Advocate for efforts to improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education.
- ▶ Advocate for efforts to better prepare students for careers in healthcare and long-term care.



WHERE WE STAND

EDUCATION/ WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Advocate for expanded access to innovative education models and multiple pathways to graduation.
- ▶ Advocate for the inclusion of financial literacy and accounting as part of high school curriculum.

Advocate for higher standards for education and assessments.

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

Advocate for teacher quality and retention initiatives. Support for 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.

Advocate against the plan to redesignate the University at Albany as a national-class research and teaching university. The University at Albany is a world-class research institution with a Research 1 Carnegie classification, signifying the highest level of research and doctoral activity. This current designation must remain.

Advocate for state funding toward Applied Technology Education Center at Hudson Valley Community College, which will provide critical training opportunities for in-demand manufacturing and skilled labor jobs.



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.

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

Advocate for continued funding, build out, and completion of the new Wadsworth Laboratory Center.

Advocate for efforts to attract the research and development hub of the National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC) to the Capital Region.

Advocate for 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.

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

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

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

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

Advocate for 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. This includes support for the creation of a self-recertification process.

Advocate for a study related to the creation of a Disabled-Owned Business Enterprises (DOBE) certification program within New York State.

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

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

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

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

Advocate for re-purposing or demolition of the former Central Warehouse Cold Storage Building.

Advocate for federal funding for the acquisition, rehabilitation, and conversion of commercial properties to residential and mixed-use development. Commercial vacancies are impacting our region's downtowns. Re-purposing existing office buildings into housing will strengthen 24/7 downtowns with residents that will support retail and food options.

Advocate for state offices to transition from Harriman Campus to open this prime site for private sector development and relocate state offices to downtown Albany, Schenectady, and Troy, which will lower post pandemic vacancy rate and add to vibrancy in central business districts.

Advocate for policies and the spending of federal infrastructure funds by state and local governments to expand access to high-speed broadband, particularly to under served communities.



WHERE WE STAND

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.

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

Advocate for policies and initiatives to increase affordable access to quality childcare.

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

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

EMPLOYMENT

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

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

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



CAPITAL REGION
CHAMBER

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. We will advocate that funding from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act be allocated to priority projects in our region. Those that live and work in the region should have access to an integrated mobility system that connects our entire region.

Advocate for investing in Upstate's aging roads and bridges and ensuring Upstate/Downstate regional parity to address critical infrastructure needs.

Advocate for funding for highway and bridge improvements.

Advocate for funding for increased public transit services that better integrate our rural and urban communities.

Advocate for funding for improved sidewalks and biking paths.

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

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

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

Advocate for increased frequency and improved reliability of Amtrak rail service.

Advocate for continued investment in our aging water and sewer infrastructure.

TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Advocate against 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.

Advocate for 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.

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

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

- ▶ Advocate for traditional and modern commercial transportation options.
- ▶ Advocate for enhanced recreational uses.
- ▶ Advocate for 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 for the economically challenged Canal communities.
- ▶ Advocate for the lengthening of the Canal's navigation season and support for maintaining the Canal's proper depth.



WHERE WE STAND



HEALTHCARE

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

Advocate for universal healthcare coverage; advocate against implementation of government-run, single payer healthcare.

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

Advocate for 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.

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

Advocate against 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 advocates for policies that promote access to affordable and reliable energy, protect energy consumers, and produce meaningful environmental progress.

Advocate for 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.

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

Advocate for legislation and policies that will address the [Chamber's concerns](#) regarding the Climate Action Council's Draft Scoping Plan

Advocate for policies that allow for the development of natural gas infrastructure and expanded access to natural gas for consumers and businesses. As we reduce the carbon intensity of our economy by transitioning to renewable energy sources, such policies will be necessary to ensure access to secure, reliable, and affordable energy.

Advocate for policies that allow for the development of multiple renewable energy sources including wind, solar, renewable natural gas, and green hydrogen. New York State must take a more comprehensive approach to energy, one that includes renewable natural gas and green hydrogen as reliable, clean, and affordable sources of energy. This approach will help reduce our carbon footprint and lower consumer costs.

Advocate for smart city and green initiatives in the Capital Region.



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 to no public review and input.

Advocate against 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.

Advocate against 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 1st. 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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