

# 2025 ADVOCACY AGENDA FOR PROSPERITY



**T**he Capital Region Chamber advocates for a thriving community that provides access to opportunity to all that call our region home.

**W**ithout question, we have experienced a period of political polarization. However, now that the elections are over, it is time for engagement and progress without political rhetoric. Our lawmakers in Albany and Washington must come together, compromise and work in partnership. Your Chamber is perfectly positioned to work with all parties to enact public policies that create increased opportunity for businesses, families, and individuals.

**W**e need pro-growth tax policies, regulatory relief, and immigration reform. We must harness the full potential of AI and semiconductor research and manufacturing to drive innovation and embrace an all-of-the-above energy policy. Such policy goals are possible through respect, honest dialogue, and compromise. It's time to turn down the heat and get to work. Because of our members and their engagement on policy issues, the Chamber is optimistic!

**T**his Advocacy Agenda reflects the positions and priorities of the Chamber that we believe will benefit our communities and drive economic growth.

**I**t is our privilege to advocate 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](mailto: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 the reduction of estate taxes which is costing the state talent, jobs and philanthropy.
- ▶ Advocate for the federal 20% [Small Business Deduction](#) to be made permanent.
- ▶ Advocate for the extension of many pro-growth business tax reforms from the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

**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.



## WHERE WE STAND

## TAXES/ GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS/ REGULATIONS

**Advocate against local “Good Cause”** eviction proposals.

**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 for a technology** neutral approach for building out infrastructure during the Broadband Equity, Access and Development (BEAD) process.

**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 for legislation to address the frequency of pay** issues which have been created after a recent court decision which determined that payment of wages to manual workers other than on a weekly basis is wage theft and subject to a lawsuit and damages.

**Advocate for a change** to the ban on telemarketing/door to door sales during any declared state of emergency. Such bans should be for a limited duration and only during times when such activity would disrupt the state’s response to an emergency.



## 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 for legislation** and policies that end the benefits cliff. Underemployed and low-income workers in New York State often remain trapped in a cycle of poverty because the structure of social service benefits discourages economic mobility and career progression. Addressing the benefits cliff would encourage workers to pursue career advancement.

**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.



## WHERE WE STAND

## EDUCATION/ WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**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.
- ▶ 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 for state funding** for University at Albany's Health Innovation & Technology Research (Health Tech) Building for cutting-edge academic and research programs at the intersection of social, health and environmental equity and artificial intelligence.

**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 by 2030.

**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 create and maintain safe communities. To this end, the Chamber is a member of the Consortium for Safe Communities which seeks improvements to public safety in New York State. Members include crime victims, clergy, businesses, community groups, law enforcement, government officials, medical professionals, legal professionals, and private citizens.

**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.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**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 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. Repurposing existing office buildings into housing will strengthen 24/7 downtowns with residents that will support retail and food options.

**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

## 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.*

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

**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.



## 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 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.

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

## TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE

**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 realistic policies, driven by stakeholder engagement and thoughtful planning, 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, while providing a predictable permitting process, 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 and the [Chamber's recommendations](#) regarding Draft Scope for the New York State Energy Plan.

**Advocate for policies** that allow for the development, maintenance and upgrading 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, nuclear, and green hydrogen. New York State must take a more comprehensive, all-of-the-above approach to energy, one that promotes innovation and 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 the revaluation and revamping** of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

**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 1<sup>st</sup>. Any budgetary changes would be adjusted from funds already paid to those non-profits if they were to continue with funding post April 1<sup>st</sup>, 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.

**Advocate against legislation** that does not include a fiscal impact statement.



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ONE VOICE, ONE MISSION, ONE REGION**

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