

# 2026 ADVOCACY AGENDA FOR PROSPERITY



The Capital Region Chamber advocates for a thriving community that provides access to opportunity to all that call our region home. And we are indeed driving opportunity and growth.

Thanks to your support, the 2025 Legislative Session was one of our most successful in a decade! Together, we achieved major wins:

- **\$7 Billion UI Loan Payoff** - Restoring financial stability and lowering employer tax rates.
- **\$400 Million CAP Initiative** - A historic investment to revitalize Albany's downtown core.
- **Protecting Business Interests** - We stopped costly proposals, including expanded prevailing wages, restrictive antitrust rules, extended producer responsibility mandates, and natural gas bans under the HEAT Act.

These victories show what we can accomplish together. Let's keep the momentum going!

**A**ffordability in New York isn't just about lowering costs. Affordability starts with competitiveness. Looking ahead, we'll advocate for **pro-growth tax policies, regulatory relief, immigration reform, AI and semiconductor innovation, and an all-of-the-above energy strategy**—built on respect, dialogue, and compromise.

**Y**our engagement makes this possible. To discuss policy issues or join our advocacy efforts, 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

*To unlock the full potential of the Capital Region, we must reduce the burdens that hold businesses back. By streamlining mandates, ensuring fiscal responsibility, and cutting through red tape, we can create a more **competitive and affordable** environment that fuels innovation, growth, and prosperity. The Chamber champions smart reforms that empower our state and region to thrive.*

**Advocate for actions that improve** New York State's competitiveness and that address its many challenges as outlined in the [Blueprint for New York – Creating a Roadmap for Change](#):

- ▶ **Business Climate:** New York ranks 50th in business friendliness and tax competitiveness. Over 300,000 regulations and the highest legislative activity in the nation create uncertainty and administrative burdens.
- ▶ **Workforce Decline:** The state has lost nearly 10% of its prime working-age population since 2005, with projections showing further decline by 2035.
- ▶ **Infrastructure Gaps:** High housing costs, aging transportation systems, and limited energy capacity hinder growth and investment.
- ▶ **Cost of Living:** New York ranks among the highest in housing burden, childcare costs, and employer health insurance premiums.
- ▶ **Outmigration:** Persistent population losses and negative net migration are reducing the state's labor pool and tax base.

### **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 reducing burdensome, outdated, and complex business taxes.
- ▶ Advocate for permanent and broad personal income tax reduction to provide relief and help sustain small businesses.
- ▶ Advocate reducing estate taxes which are driving talent, jobs, and philanthropy out of state.

**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 federal,** 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.



## WHERE WE STAND

## TAXES/ GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS/ REGULATIONS

**Advocate for amendments** to the “Housing Stability and Tenant Protection act of 2019” (Universal Rent Control) that increase affordable housing stock and eliminate burdens on responsible property owners.

**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 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 state legislation** to expand the construction prevailing wage.

**Advocate against current legislation** to adopt an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy in New York State. Instead, advocate for the “Affordable Waste Reduction Act”.

**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 future-ready workforce starts with a strong foundation in education. From early childhood to adult learners, we advocate for policies that build a seamless pipeline of talent—equipping individuals with the skills they need to succeed in a dynamic economy. The Chamber supports high-impact investments in education and workforce development that prepare our region for tomorrow's opportunities and challenges.*

**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 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 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 eliminate barriers that hold too many students back from a bright future and the state from achieving its economic potential. We specifically advocate for and are committed to these four principles and the steps that must be taken to fulfil 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 policies and initiatives** to improve access to quality 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.



## WHERE WE STAND

*Growth is not just a goal; it's a necessity. The Chamber is committed to advancing policies that help businesses scale, attract new investment, and create jobs that sustain families and communities. We believe in building a vibrant, resilient economy that works for everyone in the Capital Region.*

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

**Advocate for continued funding, build out, and completion** of the new Wadsworth Laboratory Center by 2030.

**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 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.

**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 digital gaming media production tax credit.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**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 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 policies** and the spending of federal infrastructure funds by state and local governments to expand access to high-speed broadband, particularly to underserved communities.





## WHERE WE STAND

*Private sector job creation is the engine of regional prosperity. The Chamber supports employment policies that respect the unique needs of employers and employees alike—encouraging flexibility, competitiveness, and mutual success. We urge state and federal leaders to adopt pro-growth strategies that strengthen our labor market.*

**Advocate for policies that remove barriers** to hiring and advancement for all people.

**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 legislation** that limits access to global talent for regional employers.

**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.

## EMPLOYMENT



## WHERE WE STAND

*Infrastructure is the backbone of economic vitality. Whether it's roads, bridges, water systems, or broadband, smart investment in these assets drives job creation and regional connectivity. The Chamber advocates for strategic use of federal infrastructure funds to support transformative projects that move the Capital Region forward.*

**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 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.

**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.

## 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 is essential for a thriving workforce and community. As costs continue to rise, 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.

## HEALTHCARE



## WHERE WE STAND

*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 policies, driven by stakeholder engagement and thoughtful planning, which promote access to abundant, affordable and reliable energy, protect energy consumers, and produce meaningful environmental progress. An “all-of-the-above” approach is key to a successful energy plan.*

**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 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, as well as comments on [2025 Draft 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.

## ENERGY



## WHERE WE STAND

*Trust in government begins with transparency. The Chamber believes that policy decisions should be made in the open, with meaningful public input—not behind closed doors. We advocate for reforms that make government more accountable and responsive to the public voices that shape our region.*

**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.

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**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.





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

[capitalregionchamber.com](http://capitalregionchamber.com)