



2020 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The Greater Akron Chamber (GAC) exists to drive economic growth and prosperity for Greater Akron (Medina, Portage and Summit Counties) and represents over 1,600 members, who employ over 117,000 people with \$2.3 billion in total payroll and \$66.2 billion in total revenue. We proactively support the success of the business community by strategically utilizing the collective impact of members through:

CONNECTING

members to key information on relevant political activities and engagement opportunities

CONVENING

stakeholders on pressing issues facing the business community to develop solutions

ADVOCATING

for the collective priorities of the business community in Columbus and Washington, D.C.

The GAC's ability to effectively advocate on these issues is largely due to ongoing support and input from its Government Affairs Committee. This group meets on a regular basis and is comprised of leaders from within business, nonprofit, higher education and community-based organizations. This committee is, at its core, a tool for the GAC to understand members perspectives on relevant issues and to collaboratively explore solutions. Doing this is critical to our ability to efficiently advocate on their behalf and provides us with a platform to collectively engage elected officials.

Currently, our Government Affairs Committee has over twenty dedicated members who actively participate in these efforts. Under the leadership of Co-Chairs Nick Gattozzi, Executive Director of Government and Community Relations, Kent State University and Elizabeth Bartz, President & CEO, State & Federal Communications, we have increased the frequency of our proactive activities and are determined to continue building momentum.

The issues outlined within this agenda are intentionally designed to align regional priorities with state and federal goals and objectives to ensure that our members are enabled to engage in relevant issues in a timely manner.

If you are interested in joining the GAC's Government Affairs Committee, please visit our website for more information at www.greaterakronchamber.org.



2020 POLICY PRIORITIES

The GAC's policy priorities represent key legislative issues that are relevant to ongoing activities, critical to our regions economic growth and success.

OPPORTUNITY & INCLUSION

The GAC will drive initiatives that create/expand economic opportunities for all Ohioans and support legislative initiatives that level the playing field for traditionally disenfranchised populations.

- **MBE/FBE Support** – Advocate for legislation that creates/expands policies that incentivize doing business with minority and/or female-owned entrepreneurs.
- **LGBTQ Protections** – Support legislative efforts that create employment protections for all Ohioans, regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The GAC will support policies and initiatives that enable adequate funding for the region's higher education institutions to continue providing strong educational foundations and skill development in alignment with the region's economic development priorities and workforce needs.

- **Integrate Research** – Convert the research capabilities of our region's higher education institutions into commercial and talent attraction opportunities.

HEALTHCARE

As the region's largest employers, the GAC will support efforts that strengthen the ability of its healthcare systems to attract and retain new employees and upskill and retrain incumbent workers, as well as policies and initiatives that allow healthcare systems to operate in cost-effective and innovative ways.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The GAC will actively advocate for the utilization, creation and preservation of funding opportunities and incentives that are vital in supporting job creation and retention, capital investment and creating a quality of place.

- **Tax Credits and Incentives** – Support legislative efforts that sustain and create tax credits which help secure funding for large-scale projects with long-term economic impact within our region.
- **Capital Budget** – Advocate for capital funding for priority projects within the FY21-FY22 State Capital Budget. This includes facilitating communication, awareness and partnerships for project sponsors.
- **2020 Census** – Support efforts to ensure an accurate 2020 Census count to position our region to receive maximum federal and state funding for projects and services.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

To help continue developing the region's talent pipeline, the GAC will engage in ongoing activities and utilize existing relationships within the community to realize innovative opportunities that satisfy the needs of the region's workforce.

- **Experiential Learning Opportunities** – Drive initiatives and advocacy efforts that facilitate internships, externships, apprenticeships, co-ops, job shadows and other forms of experiential learning opportunities to bridge the gap between mid-market employers and an evolving student and mid-skill workforce.
- **Mid-Tech Skill Development** – Support efforts that advance the midtech skills of incumbent workers and residents in disadvantaged populations to adapt to evolving job markets and in-demand skills.
- **Workforce Re-entry** – Support policies and initiatives that provide a route of re-entry into the workforce for those affected by addiction, incarceration or trauma.

TRANSPORTATION

In recognizing the funding challenges Ohio's transportation infrastructure faces and the importance of transit to metropolitan economies, we will actively advocate for policies and related funding opportunities that enable the continued maintenance and development of Ohio's transportation infrastructure and the reliability and affordability of urban travel.

- **Akron-Canton Airport** – Support advocacy efforts and initiatives that promote new economic activities and attract additional commercial airline and cargo services to CAK, making it more appealing to business travelers.
- **Regional Transit Authority** – Advocate for dedicated funding and sustainable resources that support the effective and affordable transport of displaced workers in urban communities to Job Hubs.



PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

The GAC is interested in a broad range of policy issues that are key to the success and longevity of Greater Akron's business community.



INVEST IN HUMAN CAPITAL

EDUCATION CONNECTIVITY

- Advocate for policies and funding that support and strengthen the cradle to career continuum which helps ensure students are prepared, succeed academically, earn a post-secondary degree or accreditation or acquire the skills they need to enter a career.
- Continue to support the APS College and Career Academies that prepare students for 21st-Century careers by linking subjects to industry themes with a strong focus on experiential learning opportunities.
- Continue to support regional STEM platform schools that serve as the model program for the development and sharing of 21st Century skills.
- Create mutually beneficial partnerships through actively working with partners to realize our region's higher education institutions' capacity to be an asset for economic development purposes.
- Advocate for standards that provide a rigorous curriculum that ensures students become college and career ready.
- Encourage communities, schools and governments to work together to fund public education for the economic success of the region.
- Advocate for programs that provide post-secondary attainment that is aligned with the region's economic development priorities.

TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

- Drive efforts to build and maintain a diverse and skilled regional workforce through experiential learning opportunities and skills retraining programs.
- Support programs, initiatives and advocacy efforts that work towards enhancing downtown vitality through the attraction and retention of talent and young professionals.

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

- Support programs that align employee skills to business needs by supporting public and private efforts to develop the capabilities demanded by employers to bridge employment disparities.
- Advocate for policies and initiatives that work to satisfy employer needs through targeted training opportunities for residents and incumbent workers in an accessible and affordable manner.
- Support the alignment of federal, state and local policy and funding to assist mid-skill workers and those in disadvantaged populations to succeed in an ever-evolving job market.



Grace Walkulchik

Chair, Greater Akron Chamber Board of Directors
President & CEO, Akron Children's Hospital

"A top concern of Greater Akron's business community is to engage students early on to explore career pathways and build viable skill sets, as well as to promote the continual growth and development of our existing workforce. We are fortunate to have educational institutions and talent intermediaries who identify employer needs and collaborate to fill workforce gaps. As a community, we need policies that support equitable and inclusive educational opportunities across the talent ecosystem to ensure the thriving future we envision for our area's families and businesses."

SUPPORT THE FOUNDATIONS OF GROWTH

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Create opportunities and enhance support networks for emerging businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive and attain self-sufficiency.
- Pursue policy and funding opportunities in collaboration with regional partners to support entrepreneurial investment and innovation.
- Work with local and regional partners to support technology transfer and product development ecosystems.
- Facilitate and support programs and initiatives that mentor, support, attract and retain entrepreneurs of all backgrounds striving to do business in the Greater Akron region.

INNOVATION CENTERS

- Promote policies and funding that enhance the retention and expansion of local industry clusters such as Advanced Materials (metal, plastics/polymers, biomaterials and liquid crystals); Advanced Manufacturing; Healthcare (biomedical); Oil, Gas and Water; Instruments, Controls and Electronics; Logistics and Distribution; Defense; and Service (Finance/Insurance/ Real Estate/Housing) as an integral part of our economic growth strategy.
- Build upon the existing momentum of regional assets such as the Bounce Innovation Hub, Akron Biomedical Corridor, NEOMED/REDI Zone, and other innovation centers focused on biotech, life sciences and healthcare industries through advocacy.
- Continue to strengthen public-private partnerships to enable creative collaboration and sustainable investment opportunities.
- Work with regional partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of economic development efforts and research partnerships within Northeast Ohio.

TAXATION

- Advocate for pro-growth tax policies that preserve global competitiveness and create a tax climate that strengthens the regional business community's ability to invest in new products, equipment and employees.
- Support the continuance, creation and utilization of tax credits as economic development tools for the Greater Akron Region.
- Advocate for policies and legislation that stands to benefit small and mid-size businesses to support retention and expansion efforts at the local level.



STRENGTHEN REGIONAL BUSINESS

HEALTHCARE

- Continue to support market-driven solutions to control growth in health care costs and foster competition in the private health insurance market.
- Support efforts to maintain adequate, predictable and sustainable payment for healthcare services provided through the Medicaid program.
- Support sustainable public-private solutions to increase citizen access to health insurance coverage and decrease the number of uninsured.
- Support initiatives that enable health care institutions to be fiscally sustainable while striving for excellent quality care to improve the overall health of the region.
- Continue participating in efforts to gather and provide data from businesses in an effort to have the most up-to-date information on health trends within the Greater Akron Region.

BUSINESS REGULATIONS

- Advocate for the reduction or elimination of mandates that impose undue burden on businesses and/or harm productivity and profitability.
- Oppose policy that does not balance employer and employee interests.
- Support efforts that work to ensure government is creating and implementing policy that is responsive to both business and citizen needs.
- Monitor the local, state and national economy by partnering with appropriate officials and governmental entities to address economic and business concerns.

UNDER-SERVED ENTERPRISES

- Support the growth and sustainability of businesses owned by minorities, women, veterans and disabled persons, including supporting them in procurement initiatives.
- Drive policies and initiatives that provide employment opportunity and economic inclusion for all residents of the Greater Akron Region.
- Advocate for funding and support for programs and initiatives that drive diversity and inclusion efforts and provide assistance to businesses owned by minorities, women, veterans and disabled persons.



REVITALIZE AND MAINTAIN PHYSICAL ASSETS

REGIONAL ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Support efforts that promote community planning concepts that provide balance for citizens to live, work and play.
- Support projects that would preserve, expand and revitalize our urban core and adjoining neighborhoods that provide a variety of housing options for residents of all income levels and ethnic and racial backgrounds.
- Advocate for funding of sustainable development opportunities that enhance regional corridors and improve existing historical assets.
- Support efforts to ensure an accurate 2020 Census count to position our region to receive maximum federal and state funding for projects and services.

COMMUNICATION

- Advocate for legislation that supports the telecommunications industry, bringing increased broadband access and 5G technologies to the Greater Akron region and Ohio.
- Support policies and initiatives that support investment from the telecommunications industry to develop and implement new technologies that enable the State of Ohio and Greater Akron Region to be adequately prepared to adapt to new applications of technology in business.

TRANSPORTATION

- Air – Support Akron–Canton Airport’s (CAK) capital improvement plan and efforts that effectively utilize CAK as a vital regional asset.
- Surface and Multi-Modal Transportation – Advocate for transportation policies and related funding that improves the movement of goods and people in a way that enables economic growth.



Steve Millard

President & CEO, Greater Akron Chamber

“To elevate Greater Akron, we must create a business-friendly environment. This requires the Chamber to respond to business concerns in an effective manner and in ways that support the big picture. Key to the success of regional economic development activities is supporting a focus on shared prosperity that brings growth and success to companies of all types. Shared prosperity also means that companies with owners and leaders from every race and demographic are being included in our work – that focus on inclusion will position Greater Akron’s companies and the broader community to achieve new levels of economic vitality.”

ENERGY

- Advocate for a regulatory structure that provides a fair balance between keeping prices reasonable, stable and affordable for customers, while ensuring utilities have the resources they need to make appropriate investments in service reliability, including the replacement of aging infrastructure.
- Advocate for the diverse supply of reliable and affordable energy, with a focus on maintaining in-state electric generation that supports sustainable jobs, a consistent tax base and economic development.
- Advocate for renewable and alternative energy resources where it does not distort competitive markets or increase the burden on taxpayers and ratepayers.
- Support the responsible development of the state's Utica and Marcellus Shale resources to provide lower energy costs for the region and expand economic development and employment opportunities within our region.
- Promote free market, cost-effective energy efficiency programs that can help our member companies make financially efficient decisions without increasing costs for any consumer.

CULTURAL AND RECREATION AMENITIES

- Promote projects that would support the arts, sports and other recreational activities that create or sustain economic impact or play a role in talent attraction and retention.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support efforts to educate state leaders on the critical needs of Ohio's transportation infrastructure and advocate for legislation that addresses them.
- Advocate for dedicated funding that provides reasonable investments on a long-term basis in Ohio's transportation infrastructure and public transportation systems.

PRISONS AND CORRECTIONS

- Continue supporting the utilization and expansion of successful, cost-saving, community corrections programs that help make communities safer, hold offenders accountable and provide opportunities for offenders to improve their lives.
- Support alternative sentencing for appropriate offenders, specifically for those who are better served by our region's Drug Courts, which will save the state hundreds of millions of dollars that could be better spent on education, rehabilitation, healthcare and workforce development.
- Advocate for policies that support workforce re-entry of those exiting our criminal justice systems, addiction services or traumatic situations.





GAC

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