



PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA



2023

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

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The Greater Akron Chamber (GAC) exists to drive economic growth and prosperity for Greater Akron, encompassing Medina, Portage, and Summit counties. The GAC represents over 2,100 members who employ more than 117,000 people with \$2.3 billion in total payroll and \$66.2 billion in total revenue.

Our public policy initiatives are designed to support the success of the business community by strategically utilizing the collective impact of members by:

CONNECTING

members to information about the impact and implications of policy impacting employers and the business community

CONVENING

stakeholders on pressing issues and engaging them in dialog to develop solutions

ADVOCATING

for our collectively established priorities in Columbus and Washington, D.C.

Our Public Policy Agenda reflects our members' mutual interests and collective viewpoints on issues and action facing the business community.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The GAC's ability to effectively advocate on key issues is due to the ongoing support and engagement of its Government Affairs Committee.

The Government Affairs Committee is comprised of more than 30 member companies from a variety of business sizes and sectors who represent our employers in policy discussions impacting their work and opportunity. This committee is the primary vehicle that enables the GAC to understand members' perspectives on relevant issues, collaboratively explore solutions, and take policy positions on behalf of our members. The committee is also responsible for collectively engaging elected officials and recommending ballot issue positions to the full Board.

Under the leadership of Co-Chairs Dwayne Groll, President, Environmental Design Group and Tracy Carter, System Director, Government Affairs and Health Policy, Summa Health, we continue to increase proactive member engagement in our work and grow the GAC's voice in policy work on behalf of our members.

The issues outlined within this agenda are designed to align regional priorities with state and federal activities. Our goal is to enable the business community to engage in policy discussions on relevant issues in a timely manner.



If you are interested in joining the GAC's Government Affairs Committee, please scan the QR code to visit greaterakronchamber.org or contact John Rizzo at jrizzo@greaterakronchamber.org.

2023 GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEMBERS



2023 POLICY PRIORITIES

The GAC's policy priorities represent key legislative items that are relevant to ongoing activities, critical to our region's economic growth and success, and likely to be acted upon in the upcoming legislative session.

While this list is not representative of everything we will work on or react to throughout the 2023-2024 legislative session, it does represent a short list of issues that we believe merit our primary focus and attention in the near-term.



The Greater Akron Chamber's mission to drive growth and prosperity for our region is augmented by our Public Policy Agenda. It reflects the business community's commitment to supporting economic inclusion, startups/expansions, a revitalized urban core, and workforce accessibility. We will advocate for future policies and initiatives in Ohio that encourage and incentivize the attraction of both new talent and business investment to our region.

TIA RAMLOW
President
Great Work Employment

DRIVE INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT IN NORTHEAST OHIO'S POLYMER INDUSTRY *(State & Federal)*

Secure funding for the work of our polymer industry to help advance this critically important economic sector and advance efforts to realize the full potential of Greater Akron's most unique high-growth industry sector. Actively pursue support and investment from various programs within state and federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, United States Economic Development Administration, and Ohio Department of Development.

STRATEGIC (RE)DESIGNATION OF RUBBER *(Federal)*

Advocate for the federal government's redesignation of rubber as a strategic material and secure the necessary investment(s) needed to promote development, scale-up, and growth of alternative sources of natural rubber. A secured supply of this material is important to our economy and national security.

STATE BUDGETS AND FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS *(State & Federal)*

Actively engage lawmakers at the state and federal level in support of key tax policies, program funding, and local infrastructure support that align with our region's broader economic development goals and improve its business climate.

BUSINESS INCOME DEDUCTION *(State)*

Maintain the Business Income Deduction, to maintain jobs and avoid raising taxes on small- and middle-market businesses.

TARGETED WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS AND INTERVENTIONS *(Federal)*

Support efforts to pass and implement provisions that seek to retain Ohio's graduates and attract future workforce through the utilization of state incentives in partnership with higher education institutions and businesses.

IRB MODERNIZATION *(State & Federal)*

Advocate for long-needed regulatory improvements to industrial revenue bonds that would enable manufacturing companies to access more flexible and less expensive capital and enhance the industry's overall capacity to grow.

NEW MARKET TAX CREDITS (NMTC) *(Federal)*

Make the NMTC program permanent and increase annual funding and project investment caps due to the program's proven success as an economic development tool in attracting private capital into low, income communities.

SAFETY FROM VIOLENCE FOR HEALTHCARE EMPLOYEES (SAVE) ACT *(Federal)*

Pass legislation that helps keep our healthcare workforce safe and provides enhanced penalties for those who knowingly assault/intimidate hospital employees, in order to help prevent future violence and other negative impacts on our healthcare workforce.

IMMIGRATION REFORM *(Federal)*

Increase the number of and access to H-1B visas and other policies, regulations, and reforms that improve our region's ability to attract and retain diverse and highly skilled talent.

INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS (ISP) *(State)*

Secure continued funding and support of Greater Akron's four existing ISPs in manufacturing, healthcare, tech, and polymers so that we can grow regional efforts to bolster the talent pipelines of these critically important industries.



At the GAC, government affairs is a core tenet of our work. Effective advocacy can help realize investments and enable policy changes that support regional growth and economic activity. Our members' participation in these efforts is critically important, and we look forward to continuing our work together on behalf of Greater Akron.

STEVE MILLARD
President & CEO
Greater Akron Chamber



PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

The GAC drives growth and prosperity for Greater Akron by advocating for policies that support the success of its business community.



INVEST IN HUMAN CAPITAL

To continue supporting the development of the region's talent pipeline, the GAC will work closely with key stakeholders to address regional workforce needs by identifying, connecting, and creating opportunities that effectively, efficiently, and cohesively bring together students, skills training opportunities, and in-demand jobs.

EDUCATION CONNECTIVITY

- Encourage communities, schools, and governments to work together to fund public education for the economic success of the region.
- 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, and/or acquire the necessary skills to enter the workforce.
- Continue to support the Akron Public Schools College and Career Academies that prepare students for 21st Century careers by linking coursework to industry themes with a strong focus on experiential learning opportunities.
- Advocate for standards that provide a rigorous curriculum to ensure students are college and career ready.
- Continue to support regional STEM platform schools that serve as the model program for the development and sharing of 21st Century skills.
- Support efforts to adequately fund higher education institutions by increasing the State Share of Instruction so they remain affordable and accessible, as well as continue providing strong educational foundations and skill development in alignment with the region's economic development priorities and workforce needs.
- Advocate for increased funding and accessibility to programs, such as the Ohio College Opportunity Grant, that help ensure students who need financial assistance can receive a quality education.
- Support initiatives to create mutually beneficial partnerships among regional institutions and industry stakeholders to realize our region's higher education institutions' economic development capacity by converting their research capabilities into commercial and talent attraction opportunities.

TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

- Drive initiatives and advocacy efforts that facilitate internships, externships, apprenticeships, co-ops, job shadows, and other experiential learning opportunities to bridge the gap between small- and mid-market employers and an evolving student and mid-skill workforce.
- Support programs, initiatives, and advocacy efforts that work towards enhancing downtown vitality through the attraction and retention of talent and young professionals.
- Advocate for policies and legislation that create new tax/financial incentives and other innovative strategies designed to attract new nonresident students and retain recent graduates.
- Pursue policies at the state and federal level that further enables our region to retain talent through various reforms to immigration policy.
- Support policies and legislation that address Ohio's "benefits cliff" by removing disincentives and barriers to wage progression and gainful employment and replacing them with improved information and direction that leads to financial independence.
- Advocate for additional funding and continued improvements to Ohio's Step Up To Quality Program to ensure Ohioans have access to quality childcare services that position our youth for developmental success and enables parents to return to and stay in the workforce.
- Support policies and initiatives that provide a route to re-entry and further funding for wrap-around services for those affected by addiction, incarceration, trauma, and mental/behavioral health issues.
- Support efforts that strengthen talent pipelines for mental and behavioral health professions to ensure Ohio has an adequate workforce to properly treat those with mental illnesses, address the stigma of addiction, and provide employers with increased access to treatment and recovery resources for employees.

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

- Support public-private partnerships that provide programmatic support and targeted training opportunities designed to align employee skills with the needs of in-demand jobs and help employers bridge employment disparities.
- Advocate for policies and legislation that support mid-tech skills training opportunities for incumbent workers and those considered to be un- or under-employed, particularly disadvantaged population, enabling them to adapt to evolving workforce trends and in-demand jobs.

SUPPORT THE FOUNDATIONS OF GROWTH

The GAC will actively advocate for the utilization, creation, and preservation of policies and programs that are vital to supporting job creation and retention, capital investment, and improving Ohio's business climate.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Advocate for legislation funding state and federal programs whose purpose is to better connect small, early-stage, and minority- and women-owned companies with capital.
- 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 ECOSYSTEMS

- Promote policies and funding as a part of our economic growth strategy 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; Communications; Instruments, Controls and Electronics; Logistics and Distribution; Defense; and Service (Finance/Insurance/ Real Estate/Housing).
- Build upon the existing momentum of regional assets such as the Bounce Innovation Hub, Akron Biomedical Corridor, NEOMED/REDI Zone, and other innovation ecosystems focused on biotech, life sciences, and healthcare industries.
- 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

- Support efforts to enact common sense reforms to Ohio's state and municipal income tax laws that favor uniformity over complexity, and balance employer interests and the needs of Ohio's metropolitan cities.
- Advocate for pro-growth tax policies that preserve global competitiveness and create a tax climate which strengthens the regional business community's ability to invest in new products, equipment, and employees.
- Support legislation that creates and sustains tax credits which secure funding for economic development projects and support business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts. Support bills enabling the continued use of tax incentives that encourage and expand the ability of employers to hire workers who traditionally have employment barriers.
- Oppose efforts to suspend and/or repeal state and federal gas taxes to avoid significantly reducing the investments made in surface and multimodal transportation.



The 2023-2024 Greater Akron Chamber's Public Policy Agenda (PPA) is the foundation for elevating the Chamber's mission. It is exciting to continue to develop the region's talent resources, support Ohio's business growth, and shape investments while serving small and large businesses across the region. The Chamber, this foundational PPA, and business will leverage the region to new heights.

DWAYNE GROLL

President
Environmental Design Group

STRENGTHEN REGIONAL BUSINESS

The GAC will advocate for policies and legislation that enables regional businesses to operate in cost-effective and innovative ways, and support initiatives that strengthen their ability to grow and succeed.

HEALTHCARE

- Oppose policies infringing upon the rights of employers, such as anti-vaccine legislation, which substantially alters their capacity and flexibility to make decisions they determine to be in the best interest of their employees and customers.
- 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 health care services provided through the Medicaid program.
- 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.
- Support sustainable public-private solutions to increase citizen access to health insurance coverage and decrease the number of uninsured.
- Support initiatives that enable healthcare institutions to be fiscally sustainable and provide quality health care.
- Advocate for a competent worker's compensation system that works for both state-funded and self-insured employers and proficiently balances providing proper medical treatment for injured employees and cost for employers.
- Support efforts to attract ARPA funding and other potential sources of transformational investment to help with select healthcare priorities, such as behavioral health workforce development efforts and assets.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Support efforts to improve Ohio's unemployment compensation system that addresses fraud and promotes tools, resources, and incentives for beneficiaries to obtain gainful employment as soon as possible.
- Advocate for the reduction or elimination of policies, rules and/or regulations that impose undue burden on businesses and/or harm productivity and profitability.
- Support efforts to ensure the government is creating and implementing policy that is responsive to both business and citizen needs.
- Remove red tape and bureaucratic barriers that unduly hinder the speed of and increase the cost of doing business.
- Monitor the local, state, and national economy and partner with elected officials and governmental entities to address economic and business concerns.
- Support policies and legislation that create employment protections for all Ohioans, regardless of gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Oppose policy that does not balance employer and employee interests.
- Advocate for policies and legislation that provide businesses with a stable, predictable body of law and protects Ohio's Constitution from out-of-state interests to ensure our laws reflect the values and preferences of Ohioans.

UNDERSERVED ENTERPRISES

- Advocate for legislation that creates and/or expands policies to increase business opportunities for minority business enterprises and women-owned business enterprises.
- Support the growth and sustainability of businesses owned by minorities, women, veterans, and disabled persons through procurement initiatives and by proactively sharing business-related information, resources, and opportunities.
- Drive policies and initiatives that provide employment opportunity and economic inclusion for all residents of the Greater Akron region.

REVITALIZE AND MAINTAIN PHYSICAL ASSETS

The GAC recognizes the massive economic implications of having well-maintained cultural amenities, robust regional transit systems, and a strong physical infrastructure has for Ohio. Because of this, we will advocate for policies, legislation, and related funding that enables the continued maintenance and development of Greater Akron's physical assets and the reliability and affordability of workforce mobility.

REGIONAL ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Support efforts that promote community planning concepts which provide balance for citizens to live, work, and play.
- Support projects that preserve, expand, and revitalize our urban core and adjoining neighborhoods which 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.
- Partner on awareness efforts regarding how public safety impacts the business community and its role in our broader economy so decision makers understand the importance of adequately funded and supported local services.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY & COMMUNICATION

- Advocate for legislation that supports the telecommunications and cable industries' efforts to bring increased broadband access and 5G technologies to unserved or underserved areas in the Greater Akron region and Ohio.
- Support policies and initiatives that leverage telecommunications and cable investments to develop and implement new technologies that position educators, businesses, and healthcare systems to be more effective and efficient.
- Advocate for legislation and policies supporting the investments made by telecommunications and cable industry partners in effective adoption and affordability programs that address barriers preventing people from connecting to broadband services and otherwise help close the digital divide.
- Support policies and legislation that maximize Ohio's ability to close the digital divide and oppose efforts that would constrain expansion and connectivity efforts or limit the options available to communities by disabling existing services and/or prohibiting public-private partnerships.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support Akron-Canton Airport's (CAK) capital improvement plan and efforts that effectively utilize CAK as a vital regional asset.
- Support advocacy efforts and initiatives promoting new economic activities and attract additional commercial airline and cargo services to CAK, positioning it for long-term economic growth and economic vitality.
- Advocate for transportation policies and related funding that improves the movement of goods and people in a way that enables economic growth.
- Support educational efforts targeting state leaders on the critical needs of Ohio's transportation infrastructure; advocate for dedicated funding and sustainable resources to support Greater Akron's public transit systems and their effective and affordable transport of displaced workers in urban communities to Job Hubs.



“Akron-Canton Airport's partnership with the Greater Akron Chamber helps create a direct connection to the people we serve, and ensures our efforts match the needs of the community. In turn, we work tirelessly to tell our region's unique business story to airlines to ensure global access for the economic prosperity of Northeast Ohio.

REN CAMACHO
President & CEO
Akron Canton Airport

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 RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

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

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 those who are better served by our region’s Drug Courts, which will save the state hundreds of millions of dollars that could be reallocated to education, rehabilitation, healthcare, and workforce development.



It is encouraging to have an agenda that is inclusive of small, medium and large sized employer needs. The plan aligns with the chamber's strategic priorities which are designed to yield greater policy wins and public funding in support of our region's economic interests.

TRACY CARTER
System Director, Health Policy &
Government Relations
Summa Health Systems

STAY CONNECTED WITH OUR WORK

Government Affairs
Events



Advocacy
Center



Polymer Industry
Cluster



Greater Akron
Business Navigator





*Thank you for your continued support of
our work.*

CONTACT

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