

May 3, 2023

Yesterday, Akron voters cast their ballots in the Democratic Primary for the next mayor of Akron. Absent a successful write-in candidacy, Councilman Shammass Malik will take the oath of office on January 1, 2024. As Mayor, Malik will have a critical role in setting the tone and the trajectory for success addressing a myriad of important issues for the long-term health and viability of our city. In his campaign, Councilman Malik outlined a number of initiatives and activities that are important to our success. On behalf of the Greater Akron Chamber, we stand ready to work with him on both the upcoming transition and the years of work that follow for the Malik Administration.

As a voice for the business community and employers in the region, our focus during this race and in our work has been to support the growth and success of the city and the Greater Akron region – a place where businesses and their employees can grow and thrive.

We have not been shy about sharing the areas that we believe are most pivotal to our success.

We need to be comfortable making big bets that are backed by well-crafted plans. From the work to be done to make downtown a competitive option for companies to relocate or expand, and our neighborhoods and core city a vibrant place to live and work, to doubling down on the emerging opportunities in the region's polymers industry – we have catalytic efforts ahead of us, but we need to take well-reasoned risks to make them happen.

We need to continue a mindset focused on inclusive economic growth. If a large percentage of our population can't access opportunity, we will never overcome the economic challenges ahead. This includes prioritizing the success of the students that are our future workforce – many of whom are currently at Akron Public Schools, Stark State College, and The University of Akron. Increasing support and access to youth employment, internships and apprenticeships will help, as well as addressing other barriers to adult employment. We also need to increase support for small, woman and minority-owned companies – to foster an economic climate where everyone can prosper.

Over the last five years, with political leadership from Mayor Horrigan and Executive Shapiro, philanthropic support from the GAR Foundation, United Way, the Akron Community Foundation and the Burton D. Morgan Foundation and the partnership of more than 20 other economic development organizations as part of Elevate Greater Akron, we have worked together to lay a foundation for critical work ahead. The partnerships and sense of collaboration that permeate the way we work with one another must continue for us to succeed. Congratulations, Councilman Malik. We stand ready and willing to help you and the team you will build by continuing the work to support the growth and success of our city.

