

## 2023 - 2024 Pro-Business Federal Policy Agenda

Business Community Advocacy Council 4/14/2023

GRCCI Board 5/3/2023

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance will lead, educate, engage, inform and advocate to advance a federal policy agenda that serves as the voice for business. Our members want to operate in a business environment that allows them to grow and thrive. GRCA's policy priorities reach beyond the legislative and regulatory agenda to encompass administrative policies that have implications on businesses, our community and economy. We urge Congress and the Administration to pursue a public policy agenda that will reinforce confidence among employers, provide resources necessary to develop a talented workforce and enable economic vibrancy for our Greater Reading Region – Berks County. Our member driven policy agenda is outlined below:

### **PROVIDING, ATTRACTING, & SUPPORTING A SKILLED WORKFORCE & IMMIGRATION REFORM**

Economic viability and long-term prosperity for Greater Reading – Berks County depends upon a well-educated and skilled workforce, paired with a healthy talent pipeline that addresses the growing skills gap identified by our companies. Federal programs should prioritize existing and critical jobs, retention efforts, skills shortages, and talent retraining for jobs of the future. Funding for educational institutions should be tied to the employment of graduates in the local community. Federal legislators should prioritize programs and funding to states experiencing population decline or stagnation and programs that encourage the next generation to stay such as expanding access to affordable, quality child and elder care programs. Our members also support improving and streamlining the immigration system so that individuals who want to move here or work here temporarily are able to do so freely and legally.

### **BALANCED LABOR + EMPLOYMENT LAWS**

Common sense changes to labor relations and employment policies are necessary to facilitate a fair work environment and address abuse. Employers oppose excessive mandates that unnecessarily increase the cost of doing business and efforts that seek to disrupt functioning employer/employee relationships through the PRO-Act or other regulatory overreach.

### **MODERN, SAFE, EFFICIENT AND RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Ensure our infrastructure is adequately funded to enable construction and maintenance of our aging transportation and utility systems along with other infrastructure. Modern, safe, reliable, and efficient Transportation Infrastructure Systems are a core function of government. Transportation systems and utility infrastructure is vital to attract and retain quality businesses to grow the economy, increase regional and PA competitiveness, and retain/create jobs. This includes Transit/Mobility, Energy, Broadband and Water/Wastewater. Our members support continued regulatory reform due to current impediments on improvements and skyrocketing costs and efforts to restore intercity passenger rail service from Reading to Philadelphia and beyond. Infrastructure development must be coupled with regulatory reform, reducing the staggering costs and timeframes associated with permitting and compliance. Infrastructure development is impossible without comprehensive and collaborative regulatory reform.

### **ENERGY INDEPENDENCE + ECONOMIC GROWTH**

We support the responsible development of all US energy, fossil and renewable. We oppose policies that lead to the sourcing of energy from non-domestic sources, forcing our nation to rely on enemy governments to supply energy that could be produced here and the exporting of energy resources to hostile nations. We support policies that seek to achieve net energy independence, reducing energy market volatility which negatively impacts all Berks County businesses. We support investments in programs that expand economic development opportunities that will help grow existing businesses and attract new businesses to the county.

### **RETAINING A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS TAX STRUCTURE/ RESPONSIBLE BUDGET + GOVERNMENT**

**SPENDING** Comprehensive reforms of and reductions in specific business taxes remain necessary to help stimulate economic development in recovery. We encourage Congress and the Administration to work collaboratively towards passing annual budgets and away from continuing resolutions while understanding that all opportunities for cost-savings and efficient spending should be exhausted before

new or higher taxes are considered to address deficit spending, entitlement programs, or new initiatives. Our members support efforts to address inflation by reducing direct government subsidies and encouraging private sector solutions.

**AFFORDABLE + ACCESSIBLE BENEFITS**

Berks County employers want to be able to offer workers quality, affordable health care options. We will continue to advocate for reforms to the health care, insurance and medical liability that will improve the system, providing flexibility to encourage (rather than mandate) and promote competition.