

2023 - 2024 Pro-Business State 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 state 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 Pennsylvania's legislature and the Governor's 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 state policy agenda is outlined below:

PROVIDING, ATTRACTING, & SUPPORTING A SKILLED WORKFORCE

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. State programs should prioritize existing jobs, retention efforts, skills shortages such as English language programs, and talent retraining for jobs of the future. Funding for educational institutions should be tied to the employment of graduates in the local community. State policy needs to focus on pivoting Pennsylvania to becoming a destination, not a place to be from. This starts with expanding the opportunities for businesses to grow as well as promoting programs that encourage the next generation to stay such as expanding access to affordable, quality child and elder care programs and reducing regulatory restrictions to opening and expanding these businesses.

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. We support finding a modern solution to funding infrastructure that moves past outdated taxing programs and incorporates transportation innovations. 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 also support efforts to restore intercity passenger rail service from Reading to Philadelphia and beyond.

REGULATORY REFORM

The business community needs continued regulatory reform from processes that impede infrastructure and business improvements and exacerbate costs. Permitting reform through increased transparency, consistent decision making, and continued reduction in the time needed to make permit decisions, coupled with limiting costs to businesses through regulatory and permit requirements is key to increasing economic development. Our members oppose the practice of regulatory changes through executive action that seeks to circumvent a collaborative process with the PA legislature.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

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.

BALANCED LABOR + EMPLOYMENT LAWS

Changes to labor relations and employment policies are necessary to facilitate a fair work environment and address abuse. Our members support reforms, including modernization, to the unemployment compensation, workers' compensation and welfare systems that focuses on returning injured employees to full health and function. Employers oppose excessive mandates that unnecessarily increase the cost of doing business including efforts to move the minimum wage to \$15 without solving

other systemic wage restrictions like federal healthcare reimbursements and expanding criteria to qualify for unemployment while the job market is so robust.

INVESTING IN ECONOMIC GROWTH/ RESPONSIBLE BUDGET + GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Renewed and increased support for funding of economic development programs that have positive social and economic impact in Berks County. We encourage the PA legislature and Governor to work collaboratively towards a performance-based, on-time budget process, without reducing the effectiveness of essential government programs. We support identifying all opportunities for cost-savings and efficient spending before new or higher taxes are considered to cover increasing program costs. We also support fiscal conservancy and preservation of the “Rainy Day Fund” in light of looming budget constraints.

IMPROVING THE BUSINESS TAX STRUCTURE

Pennsylvania’s corporate tax rates are on a path to improvement, but the overall tax climate remains prohibitive to growth. Comprehensive reform of Pennsylvania’s overall tax structure continues to be necessary to help stimulate economic development to retain and grow our population.