



## 2024 Federal Public Policy Agenda

*Approved by the KC Chamber Board of Directors, January 29, 2024*

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*The KC Chamber Board of Directors supports this agenda of federal policy measures to advance sustainable and inclusive economic growth, critical workforce development strategies, health equity, and infrastructure investment.*

### **INCLUSIVE AND GROWTH-ORIENTED BUSINESS CLIMATE**

**Support for Small, Diverse and Startup Businesses** — Small, diverse, and emerging businesses are vital to job creation and the competitiveness of the bi-state region. The Chamber calls on Congress to support funding mechanisms to expand access to capital for small business, including those in LMI communities, and Right to Start policies that grow entrepreneurial capacity in the region for small, diverse, and emerging businesses.

**Regulatory Relief** — We support initiatives to reduce unnecessary, conflicting, and onerous regulatory burdens on the nation’s industries. Regulatory relief must increase transparency and accountability and foster economic growth while minimizing the impacts of government actions on business.

**Immigration Reform** — Responsible immigration reform that improves access to much needed human capital is vital to meeting our bi-state regional workforce needs and expanding the US economy. We urge Congress to work with the Administration in a bi-partisan manner to seek immigration reform opportunities that include:

- Create policy to align H-1B visas with regional workforce needs and increase the annual quota.
- Eliminating per-country quotas on green cards for highly skilled and critical workforce needs.
- Introducing STEM-visas.
- Expanding critical temporary and permanent visa programs and guest worker opportunities.
- Protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.
- Improving border security.

**International Trade** — Measures that foster robust international trade are critical so greater Kansas City companies can expand exportation of goods and services and create jobs in our region. Congress should bolster the competitiveness of U.S. companies in the international market while protecting them from unfair taxing practices and protecting their research and intellectual property.

**Research & Development** — Research and development at universities and federally funded laboratories facilitates significant economic impact in greater Kansas City and supports cures, innovation, and job creation. The KC Chamber urges Congress to support this regional opportunity and engage its resources to advance research and development in the two-state region including support for Kansas City Inclusive Biologics and Biomanufacturing Tech Hub (KC BioHub), KU Cancer Center, NBAF, and other programming opportunities to advance the Animal Health Corridor.

**Federal Data Privacy** — We support comprehensive federal data privacy legislation which is technology-neutral and balances the need to protect consumers’ privacy with the cost of compliance for businesses.

This legislation should be enforced by the Federal Trade Commission, rather than encourage potentially crippling litigation through a private right of action. Also, this legislation should preempt the current patchwork of numerous state privacy laws to provide more certainty and consistency for businesses and consumers.

**Public Safety** — The Chamber calls for equitable and data-informed policies that reduce violent crime in the Kansas City region.

**Voting Infrastructure** — We support policies to secure and enforce the right to vote and make voting safe and accessible for all voters maintaining the integrity of elections.

**Postal Reform** — The Chamber stresses the need for an affordable and reliable US Postal Service so businesses can communicate with employees and customers efficiently and effectively.

**Military Support and Homeland Security** —The KC Chamber supports stable funding for military services at a level to provide force modernization, service-end strengths, and readiness to protect the nation. The Chamber advocates for initiatives that increase employment opportunities and quality of life for service members and their families and ensure military and veteran resources, including for mental health, are adequately funded. Finally, the Chamber advocates for policies which protect and bolster the region’s military-related resources and investment in our region's installations and defense industrial base.

## **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Fiscal Responsibility** — The KC Chamber believes a balanced federal budget and a reduction in the national debt are vital to the health of our national economy today and in the future. The Chamber encourages a regular appropriations process which includes a long-term deficit reduction plan, economic growth policies, responsible spending and congressionally-directed spending.

**Tax Reform** —To improve the climate for businesses of all sizes, the KC Chamber supports:

- Immediate tax relief and tax certainty measures for employers and employees, as well as policies that provide long-term stable solutions addressing inconsistent state income tax treatment of a mobile workforce and an ever-developing permanent remote workforce.
- Policies that incentivize startups, protect taxpayers, reduce tax fraud, and reduce compliance burdens.
- Current designations and structures for employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs).
- Expanded opportunities for tax deductions and incentives for qualifying charitable giving.
- Maintaining the current federal corporate income tax rate of twenty-one percent (21%).
- Maintaining tax-exempt status for municipal bonds and private activity bonds.

**Social Security** — We support measures to improve long-term solvency of the Social Security System including modifying the method of indexing benefits to better align with the cost of living.

**Financial Services** — The KC Chamber supports analytical, and non-conflicting regulatory measures and policies that ensure a 21<sup>st</sup> century banking system that: recognizes the value of the diversity of financial services providers in the KC region; ensures an independent Federal Reserve system; and reflects the impact of technology on financial services providers.

## **WELL-COORDINATED EDUCATION / WORKFORCE SYSTEM**

**Pre-K-20 Education** — The KC Chamber supports policies and funding to encourage a globally competitive and accountable Pre-K-20 public education system emphasizing pursuit of exemplary education and a rigorous STEAM curriculum to foster a well-trained, productive, diverse, competitive workforce for the jobs of today and tomorrow. To meet these standards and keep educational opportunities accessible and affordable, the Chamber calls for appropriate federal investment in:

- Quality early childhood care and learning programs.
- Education programs for those with disabilities, such as IDEA.
- Post-secondary education programs.
- The Carl Perkins Grant and Pell Grant expansion to short-course workforce programs.
- Increasing dual credit and workplace learning opportunities for secondary students.
- Programs to encourage adult learners to complete previous unfinished post-secondary degrees.
- Strategies to increase partnerships between employers, workforce development programs/providers, and governments for workforce education alignment.
- Measures to enhance teacher and education support staff preparation, recruitment, and retention.

**Globally Competitive Workforce Development** — Policies that promote labor productivity, provide job training skills, and encourage more citizens to enter or re-enter the workforce are essential to addressing existing workforce needs. This includes supporting:

- Increased investment in apprenticeships, secondary level technical education, adult education, and workforce training.
- Policies that address holistic workforce needs, including support for English language learners and students and families who lack access to attainable housing.
- Policies that encourage hiring from nontraditional and diverse talent pools and put a priority on improving diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice for all people.
- Expanded re-entry programs and other criminal justice initiatives that encourage returning citizens and other at-risk populations to become employed.

**Federal Jobs** — The KC Chamber supports efforts such as the National Security Crossroads recognizing Kansas City as an ideal marketplace for government operations and encourages our local delegation to advocate for opportunities to bring additional federal jobs to Kansas City. We further encourage the federal government to improve and expedite its hiring process to meet its workforce needs and improve delays in federal responsiveness to regulatory requirements placed on businesses.

## **GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**General Transportation and Infrastructure** – All critical infrastructure policies, including the deployment of the *Infrastructure and Jobs Act*, considered by the federal government should:

- Encourage safe, efficient transportation that promotes access to regional, national, and international markets and opportunities vital to regional needs.
- Encourage federal leadership to identify alternative and innovative funding sources, such as VMT, to fund infrastructure needs in the long-term and ensure the full funding of the Highway Trust Fund.
- Adequately fund competitive grants such as RAISE, INFRA, and CIG programs to increase economic competitiveness.
- Support innovative delivery tools for infrastructure investments (such as design-build, P3s, etc.) and streamline the federal approval process from planning to construction to allow for such methods.

- Expand opportunities for bi-state regional collaboration for funding and deployment.
- Adequately fund multiple modes of transportation, including transit systems and programs such as Transit Oriented Development (TOD), to maintain and expand their access.
- Support and expand transportation alternative programs such as vanpooling, microtransit, and car/rideshare programs.
- Support FAA reauthorization and provide funding for maintenance and modernization improvements for airport infrastructure.
- Continue funding improvements to channel, port, and harbor infrastructure throughout the Marine Highway Corridor system and streamline the approval process to encourage rapid project delivery.
- Increase support for the national rail passenger network to reduce freight and passenger train bottlenecks throughout the nation.
- Emphasize technological advancements such as autonomous vehicles.
- Promote environmentally responsible directives that contemplate the impacts of climate science and acknowledge that alternative fuels are becoming more prevalent to power vehicles.

**Water, Wastewater & the Missouri & Kansas Rivers** — Congress should continue to fund the maintenance and repair of flood control systems on the Missouri and Kansas Rivers to prevent flooding and keep waterways safe and navigable. Congress should also invest in measures to assist local governments in making sustainable improvements to their flood risk management, water, and wastewater systems to meet long term demands of regional development and growth. This includes fully funding the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, reauthorizing the Water Resources Development Act, preserving current output from upstream reservoirs, and opposing any attempts to divert the Missouri River outside of its current watershed.

**Broadband** — The KC Chamber supports efforts to expand broadband accessibility, affordability, and adaptability, including to underserved areas and populations. This involves reducing outdated and unnecessary regulations to broadband investment which is critical to 5G technology, fiber deployment, and the continued development of the Internet of Things (IoT). We advocate for measures to improve regional coordination in expanding broadband access given the bi-state nature of the metro area, including support for the extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

**Energy** — The KC Chamber supports federal funding, development and voluntary use of alternative, domestic, and renewable energy projects and resources, inclusive of hydrogen, traditionally sourced clean natural gas, as well as biogas or renewable natural gas produced from a clean digestion process with potential end-uses such as heating applications, electricity generation, and automotive fuel. The Chamber also supports transmission policies that get sustainable energy to market and enable partnerships between the local utility with local landowners.

**Environment** — We support advancing technology, innovation and balanced energy policy related to minimizing greenhouse gas emissions such as:

- Support of the U.S. EPA's Natural Gas STAR Methane Reduction Challenge.
- Support of federal policy that encourages the balanced use of all sources of energy to help meet federal climate goals and domestic energy needs and to avert undesirable environmental consequences of dependence on a single source of energy and minimize undesirable business impacts of new legislation.

## **ACCESSIBLE, EQUITABLE, QUALITY HEALTH & HEALTHCARE**

The KC Chamber urges continued and equitable distribution and funding of federal public health resources to our states and cities to help stabilize the healthcare ecosystem as we prepare for the end of the public health emergency. The Chamber further urges Congress to support measures that improve the health of our populace, including: addressing social determinants of health; the mandatory collection and reporting of disaggregated public health data; supporting policies to improve and incent health equity throughout our institutions and public health and safety net systems; and helping businesses reduce costs and regulatory burdens of providing health care coverage. To do this, the Chamber supports for the following:

- Strengthening provisions of the ACA, including stabilizing the health insurance marketplace, premium cost protections for consumers to maintain affordability, and financing and administration of Medicaid to meet service needs.
- Continued expansion of healthcare technology infrastructure and IT capabilities, including telehealth access, and thoughtful consideration of artificial intelligence applications in health care and subsequent regulation.
- Assessment of public health funding and infrastructure, including targeted measures to ensure adequate workforce, training, and readiness to respond to healthcare needs.
- Permanent postponement of the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) cuts. Enact no reforms that disadvantage states that did not expand Medicaid under the ACA.
- Protecting the 340B drug pricing program to help covered entities to stretch scarce federal resources, reaching more eligible patients and providing more comprehensive services.
- Increasing access to mental and behavioral health care including policies to address the opioid crisis, better integrating and coordinating behavioral and mental health services into physical health services, and increasing prevention and treatment measures.
- Immediate measures to strengthen policies governing organ procurement and allocation including increased oversight by the Department of Health and Human Services and improved consistency and transparency to develop a fair and equitable organ allocation policy.
- Appropriate medical malpractice liability reform to protect access to affordable, quality health care.
- Expanded education and career opportunities to increase and help diversify the pipeline of medical, nursing, behavioral health, and public health professionals to meet the nation's demand for care.
- Adoption of strong standards by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for flavoring and marketing of vaping products and tobacco products to reduce use, especially among teens.