



## Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce 2020 KANSAS PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

*Approved by the Chamber Board of Directors November 18, 2019*

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

#### ***Early Learning***

Research shows that the early years are critical in children's brain development and play a key role in their overall development and shape the adult they will become. Quality early childhood programs that support early learning, healthy development, and strong families are vital to preparing students for success in a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce and sustaining a healthy and growing economy. The Chamber urges the Kansas Legislature to heed the impact of early childhood education and support adequate investments in high-quality early learning, including those that advance the development of the future workforce and promote comprehensive, coordinated systems at the state and local levels. This includes support for:

- Strategies to develop a pipeline of human capital, including recruitment and retention of a quality workforce to educate our youth;
- Consider recommendations made by the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund when allocating investments from the Children's Initiative Fund and Kansas Endowment for Youth;
- Increased investment in home visiting programs that serve young children and their families; and,
- Reducing barriers of accessibility for full-day and full-year quality birth through Pre-K programs for all Kansas students.

#### ***K-12 Education***

The KC Chamber has high expectations for our regional schools and public education systems and believes increased funding, rigorous student achievement standards, and local control are vital to Kansas City's ability to compete in the knowledge-based global marketplace of the 21st century. We believe the measures and outcomes highlighted in the Kansans CAN initiative can play a significant role in advancing a well-educated population with technical skills and problem-solving abilities that are key to Kansas City's capacity to innovate, grow, and compete. The KC Chamber calls on the Kansas Legislature to support:

- Policy to assure local authority and control including:
  - Curriculum development and decision-making ability,
  - Financial flexibility and local bonding authority,
  - Authority of elected school boards,
  - Right to request judicial review of state school finance provisions
- Measures that support and encourage exemplary standards that reflect the knowledge and skills required of students in the existing and emerging sectors of the economy;
- Support dual-credit/dual-enrollment, policies to enable high school students including for non-English speaking students, to gain college credit and/or postsecondary certifications and training at

any public and not-for-profit institutions in the Kansas City area that offer appropriate programming to support their career interests;

- Support measures to enhance teacher preparation, recruitment and retention;
- Support simplification and investment in the process for certifying teachers to teach dual credit courses;
- Policy centered on empirically-based student outcomes targets such as those in the Kansans CAN vision for education;
- Policy that is not built on state mandates, scholarship tax credits, tax tuition credits, vouchers, and changes in local board elections including making school board elections partisan;
- Policy to encourage school districts to develop career pathways, internships and apprenticeships aligned to local workforce needs, including dedicated funding for career and technical center cooperatives and innovation centers; and,
- Policies and funding that support community-based behavioral and mental health initiatives in our schools.

### ***Higher Education & Post-Secondary Opportunities***

The Chamber supports adequate funding and policies to keep Kansas higher education institutions competitive and affordable, help retain graduates and quality faculty in the state, and measures to support alternative postsecondary training options to provide the region and the state with the world-class workforce necessary to meet the job demands of today and tomorrow. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support for full funding as requested by the Kansas Board of Regents for FY 2021 to ensure Kansas businesses will have work-ready talent they need to succeed in this competitive economy; and,
- Support measures to stimulate career, technical, and trade education in the state including STEM education and workforce development initiatives designed to enhance the number of qualified employees available for critical jobs in the region.

### ***Workforce Development***

Kansas City's economic success depends on providing an educated and ready workforce to fill the needs in our community in order to attract new employers to the region. At a time of record-low unemployment and noted skills gap, there is a desperate need for qualified workers among area employers. The Chamber supports policies to reduce barriers to employment and encourage participation in the regional workforce including reliable transportation to access jobs across the region. Policies should foster economic growth and expansion of opportunities for retraining and reentry programs for all workers. The KC Chamber wants to see the greater Kansas City region as a hub for attracting world-class talent. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support state funding for programs that help increase workplace readiness, adult education, and workforce certification programs;
- Support appropriate investments in work and family support programs and policies that help families meet basic needs while lowering business costs and creating a healthier and more productive workforce;
- Increase access to child care assistance for working families;
- Support insurance coverage for school-sponsored activities in businesses to encourage employer participation in real-world learning opportunities for students;

- Support workforce training, re-entry programs and other criminal justice initiatives that encourage returning citizens and other at-risk citizens to become employed;
- Support greater transparency, data sharing and partnership on workforce development programs between the Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, and Department of Education; and,
- Support measures to expand bistate training, certification and credentialing opportunities.

## **PROSPEROUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The KC Chamber supports a pro-business environment and innovative strategies and investment in effective and efficient economic development that will help the Kansas City area grow and remain globally competitive. The Chamber advocates for responsible data-based strategies to increase the availability of capital for new, expanding, and culturally diverse businesses and opposes additional transfers from the Economic Development Incentives Fund (EDIF). The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Continue to support efforts to ensure economic development incentives and tools used within the Kansas City metropolitan area are utilized solely for projects that create net new jobs in the Kansas City region;
- Support eliminating administrative red-tape and support of maximum implementation for Federal and State economic development programs, including Opportunity Zones;
- Support adequate staffing and funding to redevelop a robust Department of Commerce to remain globally competitive in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy;
- Support economic and community development programs, including STAR Bonds, to ensure Kansas remains competitive for business prosperity; and,
- Support measures to enhance the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor extending from Manhattan, KS to Columbia, MO., including policies and programs to advance animal health research and development in and around the National Bio-Ag Defense Facility in Manhattan.

### ***Small, Diverse & Emerging Business***

The KC Chamber supports enhancing initiatives to improve the climate for small business growth including:

- Increased funding for entrepreneur support capacity programs and assistance, including those targeted for diverse and disadvantaged business, to improve the climate for small and new business growth;
- Making development tax credits transferable;
- Strengthening the commercialization infrastructure at Kansas research institutions and federal research laboratories; and,
- Reforms to occupational licensing for certain professions, including increased opportunities for reciprocity between states and a requirement for a cost-benefit analysis before creating new or additional regulatory bodies.

## **BUSINESS-FRIENDLY CLIMATE**

In an environment of increased interaction of commerce, goods and services between the state, the KC Chamber calls for a climate of legislative and regulatory stability, predictability, and efficiency allowing businesses to plan for growth and expansion including measures below:

### ***Tax Policy***

The KC Chamber supports a balanced tax structure and fiscal responsibility that enables funding of pro-business policy initiatives and eliminates additional reductions in critical programs including education, infrastructure and the wellbeing of all Kansans. The Chamber:

- Opposes expansion of sales tax on professional and labor services;
- Supports the ability of cities and counties to preserve local control and taxing and spending authority including repeal of the requirement for a public vote to approve property tax increases; and,
- Support the fair collection of internet sales tax revenues for the state and local governments to ensure Kansas businesses are competitive in the global economy.

### ***Regulatory Climate***

- Support adequate funding of the judiciary and a non-partisan, non-political, non-election process for selecting high quality judges;
- Support rights of local units of government, educational institutions, healthcare institutions and other businesses to regulate the carrying of firearms (open or concealed) on their premises;
- Maintain the integrity and affordability of the workers compensation system and the viability of the Employment Security Trust Fund;
- Support added protections for all employees based on sexual orientation or gender identity and oppose legislation that enables discriminatory policies of any kind;
- Support legislation to promote a pro-business legal climate and oppose liability-expanding policies; and,
- Support measures that are dedicated for the planning and implementation of the 2020 Census which ensures accurate representation for federal programs and representation in Washington.

### ***Military Affairs***

The KC Chamber supports stable funding for the military Services at a level that maintains end strength necessary to ensure our forces' readiness and lethality; efforts to increase the quality of life for Service members and their families, including more opportunities for spousal employment and better connection to jobs for those who transition out of the military; and investments in infrastructure and capacity at our region's installations and within the defense industrial base.

- Support reciprocity of professional licenses between the states for military spouses, including expedited issuances of new licenses;
- Ensure that K-12 schools that serve high percentages of military-connected students adopt rigorous academic standards and provide a well-rounded educational experience;
- Better align research and development efforts at Kansas universities with DOD's modernization priorities;
- Support better state and regional efforts to identify and retain transitioning Service members by connecting them with jobs in the region, and ensure access to educational and training benefits; and,
- Support measures to provide for the formation of the National Security Crossroads between Kansas and Missouri.

## **SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

### ***Transportation***

The KC Chamber supports appropriate investment in transportation infrastructure including effective and innovative ways to help capture federal investment and fund all modes of transportation throughout the bistate and region and to promote and study regional approaches to public transit and transportation planning. The upgrade of roads, highways, waterways, rail, freight and air travel in an

efficient and cost-effective manner will allow the state to meet its transportation-related local, regional and statewide safety, economic development, workforce development and quality of life priorities. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support for increased state-wide transportation funding to enable key regional priorities, including public and multi-modal transportation needs;
- Support policies that encourage transportation innovation and policies that enable and encourage autonomous and connected vehicles to be deployed in a safe, efficient and effective manner that promotes local innovation, decision-making and public-private partnerships; and,
- Support policies that encourage safety across our transportation systems.

### ***ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT***

The KC Chamber encourages investments in renewable energy, balanced energy solutions, energy efficiency and reliability and supports policies that provide balance between public health and environmental protections without unreasonable economic burdens on industry, business and Kansas residents. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support development and voluntary use of domestic and renewable energy resources that are considered economical and environmentally-friendly, to deliver affordable and reliable energy to the Kansas City region and other high demand areas; and,
- Support policies that encourage expansion and development of energy and green infrastructure including alternative fuel and transportation.

### **HEALTHY COMMUNITITES**

The KC Chamber believes there is an undeniable link between the financial health of our businesses and the overall health and wellness of our workforce and that a healthy workforce is paramount to a vibrant regional economy. The KC Chamber supports healthcare, including behavioral health and wellness initiatives that ensure sufficient funding for providers and greater access to coverage for the uninsured. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Medicaid Expansion
  - Support expansion of the state's Medicaid program to close the coverage gap for working Kansans and ensure adequate funding for health care providers serving the economically disadvantaged in Kansas.
  - Support measures to prepare the state's Medicaid system to maximize federal funding opportunities.
- Support promotion, advancement and necessary funding to elevate the stature of University of Kansas School of Medicine and the University of Kansas Cancer Center;
- Support an increase in the tax on tobacco and/or nicotine delivery products to help increase workforce wellness, employer productivity and reduce health care costs;
- Support statewide implementation of Tobacco 21 and other policies that improve consumer and community health;
- Generally opposed to health care benefit mandates and provider mandates; and,
- Support policies that reduce violent crime in Kansas' metropolitan areas.