



## Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce

# 2021 MISSOURI PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

*Approved by the KC Chamber Board of Directors November 16, 2020*

*The KC Chamber, representing nearly 2,000 employers and over 300,000 employees of these members in the greater Kansas City area, is committed to working across state, county and community lines to advocate for a robust business community, inclusive prosperity and sustainable solutions to close opportunity gaps in economic development, education and workforce development, social and criminal justice, and healthcare. Systemic inequalities in these areas perpetuate broader inequalities in our community and serve as barriers to business growth and economic development throughout the region. The KC Chamber also stands ready to help our businesses recover from the Coronavirus pandemic related recession. The KC Chamber calls on the Missouri General Assembly to work with the Kansas City community to institute policy that will advance business growth and recovery, equal opportunity and prosperity for all.*

### **COVID RECOVERY**

The KC Chamber is committed to helping Kansas City area businesses and employers respond to the coronavirus pandemic-induced economic downturn by advocating for science-informed healthy policies that help businesses stay open, keep employees safe and on the payroll, and ensure a robust and inclusive economic recovery. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support tax relief and tax certainty for employers and employees impacted by the coronavirus pandemic to ensure workers are not doubly taxed including provisions that would explicitly state employees will continue to be taxed as they were as of February 2020 no matter where the employee has been working;
- Support immunity for COVID-19-related claims absent gross negligence or willful misconduct;
- Support for increased adoption and access to reliable broadband access for businesses and students, alike;
- Support programs that make investments in or provide capital to increase the small and minority business lending capacity of community development financial institutions (CDFIs);
- Support for businesses affected by COVID-19, especially disadvantaged businesses in distressed areas; and,
- Support for the extraordinary needs of educators, students and childcare providers during the pandemic.

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION**

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. The Chamber supports policies to improve quality education opportunities for Pre-K-20. The Chamber supports policies to reduce barriers to employment and encourage participation in the regional workforce. Policies should foster a quality and able workforce ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy and policies that make greater Kansas City region as a hub for attracting world-class talent. The Chamber takes the following positions:

#### ***Early Childhood Education***

- Support strategies to develop a pipeline of human capital, including improved opportunities for recruitment and retention of a quality workforce to educate our youth;



- Support for the Early Learning Quality Assurance Report (QAR) pilot program; and,
- Support reform of the Coordinating Board for Early Childhood (CBEC) changing the board structure and composition including adding legislator representatives, requiring an annual report, adopting a conflict of interest policy and granting the board the authority of to hire an executive director subject to appropriations.

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

- Support policy to assure full local authority of school boards;
- Support legislation that mandates standards, accreditation, accountability and transparency for all publicly funded schools;
- Support fully funding the Foundation Formula and prioritize the closure of the current transportation shortfall;
- Support measures to enhance teacher preparation, recruitment and retention;
- Support 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;
- Support appropriate investment and measures to increase dual credit/dual enrollment programs, including A+ funding;
- Support policies and funding that sustain community-based behavioral and mental health initiatives in our schools.

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

- Support core appropriations requests from the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development for public higher education institutions for the 2021-2022 fiscal year;
- Support investments in new assets including the University of Missouri System NextGen Precision Health Initiative, NextGen Data Science and Analytics Innovation Center, a Manufacturing Institute at MCC through MOExcels funding, and the Missouri Innovation Center at the University of Central Missouri;
- Support efforts by the University of Missouri to ensure it retains its status as an AAU university; and,
- Support appropriate funding of Access Missouri and the Missouri A+ Schools Program.

### ***Workforce Development***

- Support state funding for programs that help increase internships, apprenticeships, workplace readiness, adult education, and workforce certification programs;
- Support policies to make the state and the greater Kansas City region more attractive and accessible to the immigrant workforce;
- Support increased access to childcare for working families;
- Supports policy and innovative strategies to improve access to safe, quality, healthy, affordable workforce housing;
- 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; 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. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support for the Kansas City Consensus Agenda;
- 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 maximum implementation for Federal and State economic development programs, including Opportunity Zones;
- Support programs that make investments in or provide capital to increase the small and minority business lending capacity of community development financial institutions (CDFIs);
- Support programs that will advance Federal and State economic development investment including Opportunity Zones, workforce housing tax credits, LIHTC, Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs), Missouri Technology Corporation, appropriate funding for Missouri Department of Tourism, and measures to enhance the Animal Health Corridor; and,
- Support for Right to Start policies that grow entrepreneurial capacity in the region for small, diverse and emerging businesses.

## **BUSINESS-FRIENDLY CLIMATE**

In an increasingly complex 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, 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:

- Support measures to extend the earnings tax renewal vote for Kansas City, Missouri;
- Support the fair collection of internet sales tax revenues for the state and local governments to ensure Missouri businesses are competitive in the global economy;
- Support reinstating the Missouri film rebate program as a tool for economic development, funding for the Missouri Arts Council, including the Non-Resident Professional Athletes and Entertainers Tax (A&E Tax).
- Support measures to improve Missouri's legal climate, including reform of asbestos litigation, set a reasonable outer time limit (statute of repose) on lawsuits involving older products, reduce personal injury statute of limitations from 5 years to 3 years, preempt brand name drug manufacturer liability for copycat generic products sold by competitors (innovator liability), reduce judgment interest rates, eliminate joint and several liability, maintain historic standards for public nuisance claims and oppose legislation to weaken non-compete laws;
- Support added protections for all employees based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and oppose legislation that enables discriminatory policies of any kind;
- Support modernization of the state's initiative petition and referendum process to ensure a fair and transparent process; and,
- Support adequate funding of the judiciary and a non-partisan, non-election process for selecting high quality judges.

### ***Military Affairs***

Kansas City is strategically located at a center point between a number of heartland military installations and reaps the economic power that these bases and their accompanying workforces bring to the



region. The KC Chamber calls on state policy-makers to support stable and appropriate funding for military services in order to maintain strength and readiness critical to our nation's security and to support measures that increase the quality of life for service members and their families. The Chamber advocates for policies that increase opportunities for spousal employment, improve connection to jobs for those who transition out of the military, and strengthen investment in infrastructure and capacity at our region's installations and within the defense industrial base. This includes but is not limited to:

- Support measures to advance development and growth of the National Security Crossroads economic development corridor between Missouri and Kansas.
- Improved alignment of research and development efforts at Missouri's universities with DOD's modernization priorities; and,
- Improved state and regional efforts to identify, retain and connect transitioning service members with jobs, education and training opportunities, including standardized military training credits, in the region.

## **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. 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 and quality of life priorities. The Chamber supports the following:

- Increased state-wide transportation funding to enable key regional priorities;
- Measures to encourage regional approaches to public transit, including funding and transportation planning;
- Policies that encourage safety across our transportation systems including the implementation of a primary seatbelt law;
- Policies that encourage transportation innovation, including autonomous and connected vehicles to be deployed in a safe, efficient and effective manner that promotes local innovation, decision-making and public-private partnerships.

### ***Digital Equity and Broadband***

The KC Chamber considers digital access, and the increased adoption of broadband, essential to participation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and the Chamber believes it is vital that all Missourians have access to affordable and reliable internet. The KC Chamber supports public-private partnerships with internet service providers to build and maintain broadband infrastructure throughout the state.

### ***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 Missouri residents. The Chamber supports the development and voluntary use of affordable and reliable energy resources, including natural gas, to deliver energy to Kansas City and other high-demand areas.



### **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

There is an undeniable link between the financial health of our businesses and the overall health and wellness of our workforce and a healthy workforce is paramount to a vibrant regional economy. The KC Chamber supports measures to advance quality healthcare, including telehealth and 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:

- Support full implementation of voter-approved Medicaid Expansion in a timely manner;
- Support legislation that creates a fully-operational state-wide prescription drug monitoring program;
- Support statewide and/or local implementation of Tobacco 21 and other policies that improve consumer and community health;
- Support increased public health infrastructure funding and the equitable allocation of public health resources;
- Generally opposed to healthcare benefit mandates and provider mandates; and,
- Support equitable and data-informed policies that reduce violent crime in Missouri's metropolitan areas.