



## Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce

# 2021 KANSAS 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 Kansas Legislature 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, schools and childcare providers 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 for businesses affected by COVID-19, with special attention to minority-owned businesses and those in distressed areas; and,
- Support for the extraordinary needs of education, students and childcare providers during the pandemic and through recovery.

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

Kansas City's economic success depends on providing an educated and ready workforce to fill the needs in our community and attract new employers to the region. The Chamber supports policies to improve quality education opportunities for Pre-K-20, reduce barriers to employment and encourage participation in the regional workforce. Policies should foster full employment and 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 recruitment and retention of a quality workforce to educate our youth;
- Support consideration of 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;



- Support investment in early learning including childcare and home visiting programs that serve young children and their families; and,
- Support reducing barriers of accessibility for full-day and full-year quality birth through Pre-K programs for all Kansas students.

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

- Support policy to assure full local authority of school boards;
- Support and encourage exemplary standards that reflect the knowledge and skills required of students in the existing and emerging sectors of the economy;
- Support measures to enhance teacher preparation, recruitment and retention;
- Support policy to encourage school districts to develop dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities, career pathways, internships and apprenticeships aligned to local workforce needs, including dedicated funding for career and technical center cooperatives and innovation centers; and,
- Support policies and funding that sustain community-based behavioral and mental health initiatives in our schools.

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

- Support for current levels of state funding as requested by the Kansas Board of Regents for FY 2022 to ensure Kansas businesses will have work-ready talent they need to succeed in this competitive economy;
- Support for the continuation of the University Engineering Initiative Act; 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***

- Support state funding for programs that help increase 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 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 policy and innovative strategies to improve access to safe, quality, healthy, affordable workforce housing;
- 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, reciprocity 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 also supports:

- 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;
- Eliminating administrative red-tape and support of maximum implementation for Federal and State economic development programs, including Opportunity Zones;
- Right to Start policies that grow entrepreneurial capacity in the region with particular attention to small, diverse and emerging businesses;
- Economic and community development programs, including STAR Bonds, to ensure Kansas remains competitive for business prosperity; and,
- Measures to enhance the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor and commercialization opportunities stemming from NBAF.

### **BUSINESS-FRIENDLY CLIMATE**

In an environment of increased interaction of commerce, goods and services between the states (How can something be “between the state,” a singular noun?), 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:

- Supports a balanced tax structure and fiscal responsibility that enables funding of pro-business policy initiatives and eliminates additional reductions in critical
- Opposes expansion of sales tax on professional and labor services; Support 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,
- Supports the fair collection of internet sales tax revenues for the state and local governments to ensure Kansas businesses are competitive in the global economy;
- Supports policies to secure and enforce the right to vote and make voting safe and accessible for all voters, including adequate funding of the US Postal Service, while maintaining the integrity of elections;
- Support added protections for all employees based on sexual orientation or gender identity and oppose legislation that enables discriminatory policies of any kind; and,
- Support legislation to promote a pro-business legal climate and oppose liability-expanding policies.

### ***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.
- Reciprocity of professional licenses between states and for military spouses, including expedited issuance of new licenses;



- Improved alignment of research and development efforts at Kansas' 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 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 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 implementation and funding of the IKE Transportation Program;
- 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.

### ***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 Kansans 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 Kansas 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 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 telehealth, 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 expansion of the state's Medicaid program to close the coverage gap for working Kansans and ensure adequate funding for healthcare providers serving the economically disadvantaged in Kansas;
- 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 statewide 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 Kansas' metropolitan areas.