



## 2022 Federal Public Policy Agenda

Approved by the KC Chamber Board of Directors, February 28, 2022

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*In order to grow opportunity and prosperity in the two-state Kansas City region, and across our country, the KC Chamber calls on Congress to return to regular order and reestablish a civil process to address economic recovery, advance inclusive prosperity and develop sustainable solutions to close opportunity gaps in economic development, education and workforce development, social and criminal justice, and healthcare. The Kansas City region has seen how systemic inequalities in these areas perpetuate broader inequalities in our community and serve as barriers to business growth and economic development throughout the region. Finally, the KC Chamber stands ready to help our businesses and community recover from the Coronavirus pandemic and related economic challenges.*

The KC Chamber Board of Directors supports this agenda of federal policy measures to advance sustainable, inclusive economic recovery through workforce development, job creation, health equity and infrastructure investment.

### **VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE, GROWTH-ORIENTED BUSINESS CLIMATE**

**Coronavirus-19 Relief** — The Chamber supports measures to provide appropriate relief to businesses and state and community agencies significantly impacted by the Coronavirus.

**Inclusive Workforce** — The KC Chamber supports policies that put a priority on improving diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice for all people through federal, state, community, and workplace infrastructure and investment. The Chamber also supports equitable and data-informed policies that reduce violent crime in the Kansas City region.

**Voting and Postal Infrastructure** — The Chamber 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 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 initiatives that create jobs by stimulating entrepreneurship, startups and innovation and closing economic development opportunity gaps including measures to reduce frivolous lawsuits and predatory patent infringement.

**Regulatory Relief** — The KC Chamber supports initiatives to reduce unnecessary, conflicting, and onerous regulatory burdens on the nation's industries by balancing responsible and inclusive economic growth and job creation with necessary public protections while increasing transparency and accountability in the regulatory process and minimizing the impacts of government actions on business.

**Immigration Reform** — The KC Chamber believes responsible immigration reform that improves access to much needed human capital is vital to job creation, addressing 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:

- Increasing in the annual quota for H-1B visas.
- Eliminating per-country quotas on green cards based on critical workforce needs and talent-oriented immigration measures.
- Introducing STEM-visas.
- Expanding critical temporary and permanent visa programs and guest worker opportunities.
- Protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.
- Improved border security.

**International Trade** — The KC Chamber supports measures to foster robust international trade so that greater Kansas City companies of all sizes can expand exportation of goods and services and create jobs in our region. This includes advocating for strategies to 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.

**Federal Data Privacy** — The KC Chamber supports comprehensive federal data privacy legislation that is technology-neutral and balances the need to protect consumers' privacy with the cost of compliance for businesses. Enforcement should come from properly resourced Federal Trade Commission, and the policy should preempt the current patchwork of numerous state privacy laws and provide more certainty and consistency to businesses and consumers.

## **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Fiscal Responsibility** — The KC Chamber believes a balanced federal budget and a reduced national debt are vital to the health of our national economy today and in the future. The Chamber encourages a return to a thoughtful, collegial 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 impacted by COVID-19, as well as policies that provide long-term and stable solutions addressing current 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** — The KC Chamber supports measures to improve long-term solvency of the Social Security System including modifying the method of indexing benefits to mirror real changes more closely in the cost of living.

**Financial Services** — The KC Chamber supports prudential, analytical, and non-conflicting regulatory measures and policies that assure 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 robust and accountable Pre-K-20 public education system emphasizing pursuit of exemplary education including vital technical training and a rigorous STEM curriculum based on globally competitive standards and fostering a well-trained, productive, competitive workforce for the jobs of today and tomorrow. To do this and keep educational opportunities accessible and affordable, the Chamber calls for appropriate federal investment in:

- Early childhood care and learning programs.
- Education programs for those with disabilities.
- Post-secondary education programs (four-year colleges, graduate programs, community colleges, apprenticeship programs, workforce certification programs).
- The Carl Perkins Grant and support for Pell Grant reform.
- Increasing dual credit opportunities for secondary students.
- Programs to encourage adult learners to complete previous unfinished post-secondary degrees.

Finally, the Chamber supports policies to encourage collaboration between education leaders, workforce development professionals and industry and government officials at all levels of the workforce system as education policy is developed.

**Globally Competitive Workforce Development** — The KC Chamber supports policies that promote labor productivity, provide job training skills, and encourage more citizens to enter or re-enter the workforce. This includes increased investment in secondary level technical education, adult education, and English as a second language, as well as support for workforce training, re-entry programs and other criminal justice initiatives that encourage returning citizens and other at-risk citizens 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.

**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 essential funding programs.

## **GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**General Infrastructure** – All critical infrastructure planning considered by the Federal Government should:

- Consider multiple funding sources including those both new and innovative - and identify sufficient funding for investment, including the continuation of existing programs and utilization of innovative delivery tools such as public-private partnerships (P3s).
- Support efforts to streamline infrastructure investments, such as design-build, and have comprehensive look-at polices, practices, and roadblocks that can be streamlined to move from planning to construction quicker.
- Expand opportunities for bi-state regional collaboration for funding and deployment.

- Adequately fund multiple modes of infrastructure development and programs to maintain and expand their access.
- Provide funding for maintenance and modernization improvements for airport infrastructure including Kansas City International Airport, and for improvements to channel, port, and harbor infrastructure throughout the Marine Highway Corridor system.
- Promote environmentally responsible directives and contemplate impacts of Climate Science.
- Emphasize technological advancements.

**Transportation** — The KC Chamber urges the prioritized funding and deployment of the following *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) components:

- Encouraging safe, efficient transportation that promotes access to regional, national, and international markets and opportunities vital to regional needs.
- In addition to state and local federal funding obligations, providing the RAISE and INFRA Grants, CIG programs, and other competitive grants aimed at increasing economic competitiveness. Incentivize innovated delivery tools such as public-private partnerships (P3s).
- Adequately funding multiple modes of transportation, including transit systems and programs such as Transit Oriented Development (TOD), to maintain and expand their access. Encourage states to adequately fund public transportation in order to maximize the federal matching funds.
- Promoting environmentally responsible directives, contemplate impacts of Climate Science, and acknowledge that while fossil fuels are the dominate means to power vehicles, alternative and innovative funding sources, such as VMT, should be considered and studied/piloted in order to adequately fund infrastructure needs in the long-term.
- Emphasizing technological advancements such as clean energy or autonomous vehicles.
- Supporting and expanding transportation alternative programs such as vanpooling, microtransit, and car/rideshare programs.
- Increasing support for the national rail passenger network to reduce freight and passenger train bottlenecks throughout the nation.

**Water, Wastewater & the Missouri & Kansas Rivers** —The Chamber calls on Congress to adequately fund the maintenance and repair of flood control systems on the Missouri and Kansas Rivers to prevent flooding and keep waterways safe and navigable, and to 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.

**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 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.

**Broadband** — The Chamber supports efforts to expand broadband access to currently underserved areas and populations and reduce outdated and unnecessary regulations to broadband investment which is critical to 5G technology and the continued development of the Internet of Things (IoT). The Chamber also supports efforts to improve regional coordination efforts in expanding broadband access given the bi-state nature of the region.

**Energy** — The KC Chamber supports federal funding, development and voluntary use of alternative, domestic, and renewable energy projects and resources, inclusive of 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.

**Environment** — The KC Chamber supports 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.
- Support for transmission policies that get renewable energy to market, and that enable partnerships between the local utility with local landowners.

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

The KC Chamber urges continued and equitable distribution and funding of COVID resources to our states and cities and extension of emergency health provisions to help states with pandemic-related health care needs. The Chamber further urges Congress to support measures that improve the health of our populace, including social determinants of health and policies to improve and incent health equity throughout our institutions and public health and safety net systems, and to help businesses reduce costs and regulatory burdens of providing health care coverage. This includes support for the following:

- COVID-19 administration policies including mandatory collection and reporting of disaggregated public health data to reduce geographic, age, racial and ethnic and other inequities in testing, treatment, and vaccine access.
- Strengthening provisions of the ACA, including stabilizing the health insurance marketplace, premium cost protections for consumers, and financing and administration of Medicaid to meet service needs.
- Continued expansion of telehealth including Medicare coverage and reduction of regulatory barriers for this critical healthcare delivery measure.
- Assessment of public health funding and infrastructure to ensure adequate workforce, training, and readiness to respond to disease outbreaks now and in the future.
- Permanent postponement of the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) cuts. Enact no reforms that disadvantage states that did not expand Medicaid under the ACA.
- Measures to increase access to mental and behavioral health care including policies to advance “Trauma-Informed Care”, treatment and prevention measures.
- Urgent and 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, behavioral health and public health professionals.
- Encourage the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to adopt strong standards for flavoring and marketing of vaping products and tobacco products to reduce use, especially among teens.