As the nation confronts a struggling economy, policymakers must carefully assess the impact legislative proposals have on businesses. It cannot be stressed enough how important a welcoming business environment is to the development and expansion of small, medium and large businesses in Maryland.

To ensure economic growth, potential business investors need to feel welcomed in Maryland. Business incentives are just part of the bigger picture of having a strong business platform. Many other factors are involved including a solid business tax policy that works for the entire state and a regulatory system that is seen as fair, equitable, and predictable.

It remains critical for Maryland to be competitive with other states that vie for the same opportunities for new business development and expansion. Considerable concern has developed in recent years about the policy directions of the Maryland General Assembly and its impact on the state’s reputation for attracting and retaining business. Economic development has always been very competitive and the increase in technology utilization and the identified economies of the future (life sciences, technology, computer security, etc.) has brought many states to the forefront of fighting for a competitive edge. Maryland has a unique mix of opportunities through BRAC, an abundance of federal facilities, a highly educated workforce, a quality education system, vast natural resources, and premier research institutions that will deliver us through these tough times, but it depends on the proper allocation of tight resources and the commitment to a true partnership between government and the business community.
Bioscience
• The GBC strongly supports dedicating at least $6 million in tax credits for investments in biotechnology and urges the General Assembly to double the funding in FY 2012 in order to fully maximize the State’s return and capitalize on this mounting industry.

• The GBC supports the recommendations laid out in Governor O’Malley’s BIO 2020 Initiative to attract and grow biotechnology companies in Maryland by leveraging our science and technology assets.

• The GBC supports the continued State investment in bioscience facilities, namely the Science + Technology Park @ Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland, Baltimore BioPark.

Education
• The GBC fully supports the continued growth and expansion of quality charter schools that are setting a new bar for innovative teaching techniques in Maryland. This can only be achieved by serious charter school reform to grant broader autonomy and commit appropriate funding to charter schools.

• The GBC supports legislation that adds alternative pathways for teacher certification that captures numbers of minority and women-dominated businesses, the current economic conditions make it unwise to pass legislation changing tax policy until the study and final report are completed.

• GBC continues its longstanding support of establishing a "firewall" to protect the integrity of the Transportation Trust Fund to ensure that funds designated for the maintenance and expansion of our state’s transportation system are used for their purposes. Passage of "firewall" legislation is necessary to restore "public trust" in the Transportation Trust Fund.

• GBC urges the Maryland Department of Transportation to "fast track" the approval and construction of transportation infrastructure projects needed to meet the demands of BRAC and commuter routes between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

• GBC supports the General Assembly’s immediate passage of legislation necessary for the State to qualify for federal funding under the “Race to the Top” program. Needed legislation should be enacted on an emergency basis, if necessary, to meet federal requirements.

• The Greater Baltimore Committee continues its support of investing in higher education to ensure that Maryland has a highly qualified and trained workforce to serve our growing knowledge-based economy. This includes the funding of community colleges to enhance access to higher education opportunities for all income levels and to provide an avenue for customized job training skills.

• The GBC recognizes that STEM (science, technology, engineering, & mathematics) subjects are at the core of the knowledge-based economy critical to Maryland’s future. Every effort must be made to ensure that primary and secondary schools are deeply rooted in these subjects in order to properly prepare our youth for higher education opportunities and the workforce.

Transportation
• The GBC is committed to the sustainability and development of Maryland’s transportation infrastructure. The GBC created the Transportation Financing and Governance Task Force to study the manner in which transportation is funded and managed in Maryland. A report and recommendations will be issued this year.

• The GBC supports legislation allowing teachers to opt out of the GBC endorses conservation as one of the ways to expedite fashion.

Growing the Economic Base
• Recognizing the tremendous potential for greater numbers of minority and women-owned businesses, the Greater Baltimore Committee offers its full support for programs and policies aimed at the development and expansion of minority & women-owned businesses.

• The GBC recognizes that open access to credit is crucial to small businesses and endorses streamlining the loan approval process and expanding access to credit by strengthening loan guarantees for small businesses.

• The GBC supports the job creation stimulus for those most affected by the recession through a tax credit for every unemployed worker a company hires.

• The Greater Baltimore Committee urges increased funding of the Department of Business and Economic Development in order to assure that financing programs and necessary resources are available to existing Maryland businesses and those seeking to expand in Maryland.

• We fully support the funding of programs whose mission is to develop and expand Maryland small businesses, like the Maryland Small Business Development Financing Authority, and the Venture Fund.

Preserving a Competitive Business Climate
• The Greater Baltimore Committee opposes any proposals to increase or restructure corporate taxes. A quick fix effort to address the State’s budget woes through hasty legislation is not the answer to solve the current budget problems. The Business Tax Reform Commission should be permitted to complete its legislative mandate to examine the impact that “combined reporting” and other business taxes may have on Maryland businesses. The current economic conditions make it unwise to pass legislation changing tax policy until the study and final report are completed.

• Tax credits have proven to be a sound investment tool to spur economic growth and create jobs. The GBC urges the Governor and the General Assembly to retain business tax credits including:
  o Extension of current funding for heritage structure tax credits or reform of the program to ensure that heritage structure revitalization projects can move forward.
  o Renewal of the Research and Development (R&D) tax credit at its current level to ensure a competitive environment with our neighboring states.

Health Care
• GBC supports efforts to increase wellness programs for employees as a way to reduce the incidence of chronic disease in Maryland.

• The Greater Baltimore Committee urges increased funding of the Department of Business and Economic Development in order to assure that financing programs and necessary resources are available to existing Maryland businesses and those seeking to expand in Maryland.

Energy and Environment
• The GBC supports a more stable and predictable regulatory policy that balances legitimate environmental concerns but allows projects to move forward in a competitive and open manner.

• While considering our growing electricity and energy challenges, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges the General Assembly to resist re-regulation as a popular solution that works politically in the short-term, but creates long-term negative unintended consequences.

• Alternatives to “coal-fired” energy generation are the future. The General Assembly needs to pass legislation to enable alternative sources of energy (i.e. wind, solar, and nuclear, etc.) to be generated and distributed in an expedited fashion.

• The GBC endorses conservation as one of the ways to meet our state energy reduction goals and encourages the State to continue internal reviews to identify methods to consolidate contracts and maximize taxpayer dollars.

Public Safety
• The GBC advocates for continued state funding for substance abuse and ex-offender programs aimed at reducing recidivism and removing barriers to employment.

• The GBC supports policies that deliver swift and certain justice to gun-crime offenders, including legislative policies that promote a coordinated approach by agencies of the criminal justice system to strengthen enforcement activities, prosecution, and sentencing of offenders who commit gun crimes and to toughen the consequences for repeat gun-crime offenders.

• Public safety is fundamental to the enjoyment of our City’s many attractions. Disturbance caused by minors engaged in the illegal consumption of alcohol cannot be tolerated. Therefore, the Greater Baltimore Committee supports legislation to restrict the patronage of certain establishments by minors after hours.