GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE
2013 Legislative Agenda

Competitiveness should be at the top of lawmakers’ priority lists

For Maryland businesses and private-sector advocates who promote economic growth and job creation, the definition of a good business climate boils down to one word:

Competitiveness.

Two years ago, the Greater Baltimore Committee launched an ongoing initiative to articulate for Maryland’s elected leaders the basic elements of a competitive business climate. Eight core pillars for business growth were identified by the GBC through a year-long series of focus groups and feedback sessions with more than 50 Maryland CEOs and economic developers.

The eight core pillars from “Gaining a Competitive Edge,” are:

• Government leadership that unites with business as a partner
• A highly-educated workforce that meets business needs
• Streamlined, stable and predictable regulatory policies
• A competitive and fair tax structure
• Competitive costs of doing business
• Superior transportation infrastructure with reliable funding
• Strategic and effective state investments in business growth
• Coordinated, long-term & well-funded business marketing strategy

The GBC has promoted these core pillars to lawmakers as the framework around which to build a strategic plan for economic growth and job creation in Maryland. And these days it is a positive sign that virtually all elected leaders in the State House profess a commitment to job generation.

However, a disconnect still exists in Annapolis and too often, in a hectic session of conflicting agendas, lawmakers find themselves casting votes for policies that detract from the bedrock foundation of policies that generate economic success.

For Maryland to fully realize its potential for economic growth and job creation, policy makers in Annapolis must keep competitiveness at the top of their agenda. In fiscal matters, the GBC urges lawmakers to focus on strategically leveraging operational appropriations and capital investments to ensure Maryland’s competitive strength for future success.

In 2013, key legislative issues that relate to competitiveness include:

• Transportation. Maryland’s transportation infrastructure is a critical asset for economic competitiveness. But, due to stagnant funding, Maryland will have no funds available for new transportation projects beyond system maintenance as early as 2018, fiscal experts predict.

• Education. Public policies must foster educational excellence and be responsive to the specific needs of Maryland’s business sector.

• Bioscience and technology. Growth of Maryland’s bioscience and tech sectors must be aggressively nurtured.

• Broadening the economic base. Access to opportunity for small, minority-owned and women-owned businesses must be promoted.

• Health care. Wellness programs in business workplaces must be promoted and scientific research in the health care industry must be nurtured.

• Energy. Safe, reliable and clean sources of energy are critical to the future economic growth and improved quality of life.

These are just a few key examples, but Maryland’s many strengths – including education, workforce, tech resources and high quality of life – give our state an exceptional base of assets for economic growth. But policy makers must ensure they build upon our assets, not take them for granted.

The full “Gaining a Competitive Edge” report can be found at www.gbc.org.
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Transportation
Maryland’s transportation infrastructure is a critical business asset. The proper maintenance and repair of our infrastructure, including roads and bridges, is not only needed for a competitive business environment, but is also a matter of public safety. The GBC has long advocated for strengthening funding for transportation investment and will continue to do so. During the 2013 session, the GBC will continue to articulate the compelling and urgent need to increase revenues by no less than $800 million and prohibit transportation trust funds from being redirected to unrelated uses.

• The GBC advocates passing “firewall” legislation to restore the public’s trust in funding the Transportation Trust Fund.
• The GBC supports increased funding for transportation. We remain supportive of a gas tax, but remain open to alternative funding methods, provided they contain a lockbox or firewall provision to protect funds.
• The GBC supports strategically leveraging public-private partnerships to deliver public infrastructure projects. Enhancements to current P3 legislation that provide for more efficient and timely review by the projects. Enhancements to current P3 legislation that provide for more efficient and timely review by the
• The GBC urges fast tracking MDOT approval and construction of transportation infrastructure projects needed to meet the increased demands along commuter routes between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Education
The relationship between robust economies and a highly skilled workforce is well documented. The success of tomorrow’s economy will be determined by how well we prepare our students today. To meet business demands for a workforce that is well educated and better skilled, the GBC strongly supports public policies that foster educational excellence and are responsive to the demands of Maryland’s dynamic economy.

• The GBC advocates for education policies that help primary and secondary schools provide a strong educational foundation, embracing technology-based learning systems and integrating STEM education.
• The GBC recognizes the need for increased funding for school construction and renovation, and encourages the exploration of innovative funding mechanisms supported by reliable funding streams.
• The GBC supports the state’s sustained investment in higher education programs and supports efforts to expand learning opportunities for broader segments of the population, including expanded opportunities at community colleges.
• The GBC also supports innovative approaches to curriculum delivery that incorporate job training skills and career development strategies.
• The GBC fully supports the expansion of quality charter schools in Maryland and supports policies that increase funding and grants broader autonomy to existing charter schools.

Bioscience
The GBC is a strong supporter of Maryland’s bioscience industry. Maryland is home to more than 500 core bioscience companies, representing approximately 8 percent of the U.S. industry. This is the 2nd largest cluster (per capita) in the United States and 4th overall in “core biotechnology” companies.

• The GBC supports increasing the biotech tax credit from the existing $8 million to $15 million as suggested in the Life Sciences Advisory Board’s study, “BioMaryland 2020.”

Core Pillars for a Competitive Business Environment

• Government leadership that unites with business as a partner
• Workforce that is highly-educated and meets Maryland’s business needs
• Regulatory policies that are streamlined, stable and predictable
• Tax structure that is fair and competitive
• Competitive costs of doing business
• Superior transportation infrastructure with reliable funding mechanisms
• Strategic and effective state investments in business growth
• Business marketing strategy that is aggressive, coordinated, long-term and well-funded

The GBC supports increased funding of the Department of Business and Economic Development to ensure resources are available to Maryland businesses and those seeking to expand in Maryland.
• The GBC opposes “combined reporting” legislation, which would negatively alter the current corporate tax structure and diminish the economic vitality of our state.
• The GBC opposes efforts to alter the current legal standard of assessing negligence involving instances of personal injury.

Health Care
• The GBC supports efforts to increase employee wellness programs that focus on chronic disease prevention and promote good health in the workplace. Corporate wellness programs benefit our economy by reducing health care costs, reducing absenteeism and increasing productivity.
• The GBC opposes measures to restrict scientific research and stifl job creation in the health care industry.

Energy
Safe, reliable and clean sources of energy are critical to the future economic growth and quality of life for all Marylanders. The GBC supports public policies that address the growing demands for alternative energy sources (i.e. wind, solar, nuclear and other energy sources) in the state accompanied by methods to ensure its efficient delivery.
• 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 GBC 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.