GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

2017 Legislative Priorities

Strengthening Maryland’s Competitive Edge
The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) focuses on making the business climate competitive so our economy can grow, innovate and thrive. The GBC believes in expanding the economy and creating jobs to improve the lives of those in the Greater Baltimore region and throughout Maryland.

As an independent, private sector thought leader and problem-solving organization that collaborates with elected officials, top business CEOs and nonprofit leaders, the GBC has the experience, expertise and relationships to advocate for policies that provide a competitive edge for Maryland.

The GBC’s mission is to improve the business climate of Greater Baltimore by organizing its corporate and civic leadership to develop solutions to the problems that affect the region’s competitiveness and viability. This couples with the GBC’s vision that the Greater Baltimore region (Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Howard, and Harford counties) be recognized as a leader in the global economy.

Our core belief system is represented in the GBC report, *Gaining a Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*. The report identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job creation:

- Government leadership that unites with business as a partner.
- Workforce that is highly-educated and meets Maryland’s needs.
- Regulatory policies that are streamlined, stable and predictable.
- A 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 2017 GBC Legislative Priorities reflect these principles by providing a roadmap for policymakers to improve the business climate, build upon our strengths and create an environment for success. Top priorities focus on building a strong workforce, promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, advancing growth-oriented transportation policies, creating a competitive tax structure, promoting tourism as an economic driver and ensuring public safety to protect business interests and employees.

Maryland possesses many inherent assets that drive the economy, including a highly-skilled and educated workforce, proximity to large markets, world-class higher education and research institutions, transportation assets including the Port of Baltimore and Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport and leading employers in the private sector, public sector, health care and higher education. In the 2017 session of the Maryland General Assembly, policymakers should adopt policies to protect, promote and grow these assets.

The GBC looks forward to advancing these priorities. By working together to leverage our assets and enhance opportunities, I am confident that Maryland will be recognized as a leader in the global economy.

Donald C. Fry
GBC President & CEO
Building and Strengthening the Workforce

Preparing youth to be successful in tomorrow’s workplace will require innovative and industry-specific training programs. Policymakers should support policies that ensure the state’s workforce is comprised of well-trained workers at all skill levels.

➤ Expand early childhood education so all children have access to high-quality learning opportunities to succeed in school.

➤ Ensure school funding is adequate to prepare all students to achieve academic proficiency standards and succeed in post-secondary education or the workforce.

➤ Study the feasibility of creating a year-round training and education program for out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24.

➤ Provide reliable funding for year-round and summer jobs programs for youth.

➤ Provide incentives to encourage workers to receive training or meet higher education standards for Maryland’s growing Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) occupations and jobs.

➤ Ensure Maryland’s public education system and community colleges are preparing students to succeed in STEAM fields and careers.

➤ Provide incentives to encourage more high schools to follow the early college model where students graduate with a diploma or an associate degree.

➤ Increase focus and viability of employer-based apprenticeships across all industries including those outside of construction trades.

➤ Encourage employment opportunities for “returning citizens” to reduce recidivism.
Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship

As Maryland competes to be a leader in emerging technologies and grow a strong entrepreneurial community, state policies and programs need to reflect these priorities. In order to compete and succeed in the global economy, Maryland’s small and emerging companies, including minority and women-owned firms, need incentives to raise capital and advance their ideas, services and products to market.

➤ Establish an early-stage investment fund that increases the availability for follow-on capital investments in technology start-up companies and encourages these important companies to remain in Maryland.

➤ Strengthen development and training programs that encourage entrepreneurship and broaden business prospects for small, minority and women-owned businesses.

➤ Expand initiatives that stimulate commercialization and technology transfer from Maryland’s research universities.

➤ Expand eligibility of the Maryland Biotechnology Investment Incentive Tax Credit to start-up companies and technology developed in the state’s research universities.

➤ Support expansion of One Maryland Tax Credit to include business incubators for startup companies.

➤ Expand broadband access and speed to promote entrepreneurship, create technology hubs and create economic justice.
Advocating Growth-Oriented Transportation Policies

Employers and workers benefit from an interconnected multimodal transportation system that provides meaningful connections to employment hubs. Policymakers should focus on strategic investments in roads and mass transit projects that will provide an integrated and efficient transportation network. Transportation revenues should be sufficient and provide long-term stability in order to maintain and enhance the system.

➤ Develop a 10-year strategy that lays out a balanced, comprehensive plan to invest in all modes of transportation.

➤ Ensure funding of the Consolidated Transportation Program, Maryland’s six-year capital budget for transportation projects.

➤ Support measures to ensure funding for the Howard Street Tunnel for double stack capabilities to improve the long-term competitiveness of the Port of Baltimore.

➤ Support funding for transportation options to major job centers (e.g., Port Covington, Tradepoint Atlantic).

➤ Examine the feasibility of creating local or regional transportation authorities to complement state initiatives.

➤ Oppose policies that reduce the revenues or revenue sources used to fund the Transportation Trust Fund, Maryland’s dedicated source of funding for transportation and infrastructure needs.

➤ Develop a plan to review and improve public transit routes.
Ensuring Public Safety to Protect Business Interests and Employees

Public safety is integral to improving the business climate for companies and workers. It is important for policymakers to appreciate the direct relationship between public safety and job growth and to promote strategies that decrease crime, address mental health and drug addiction, and improve the relationship between the citizenry and law enforcement.

➤ Substantially reform or eliminate the cash bail system in Baltimore City to ensure that low-income individuals charged with a crime do not remain unnecessarily incarcerated pending trial because of their financial status.
➤ Support police reform in Baltimore.
➤ Increase drug treatment funding.
➤ Ensure adequate funding for programs that promote behavioral health care.

Promoting Tourism as an Economic Development Driver

Tourism is a well-established economic driver of jobs, revenue and investment. The Greater Baltimore region’s tourism industry is an important part of the state and region’s overall economy. Policymakers should support strategies that continue to grow this vital industry sector.

➤ Support expansion of the Baltimore Convention Center.
➤ Support construction of a new or modernized arena in Baltimore.
➤ Improve and modernize Pimlico Race Course to ensure a world-class venue for the Preakness.
Building a Competitive, Predictable and Fair Tax System

A fair and predictable tax structure is a key factor that determines business location and expansion, yet Maryland’s tax structure remains uncompetitive in some areas. The state’s spending process and tax structure should be reformed to ensure necessary government priorities are being met without placing an undue burden on individual or business taxpayers.

➤ Support tax restructuring for pass-through entities to a level comparable in neighboring states.
➤ Oppose passage of combined reporting, which would negatively affect the corporate tax structure and diminish the economic vitality of our state.
➤ Implement single sales factor apportionment for business and industry sectors.
➤ Study the feasibility of incrementally reducing the corporate tax rate to be more competitive with surrounding states.
➤ Develop short and long-term strategies to cover the increasing burden of Maryland’s debt service and reduce the pressure on the General Fund to cover the cost of debt service.
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