GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

2018 Legislative Priorities
Strengthening Maryland’s Competitive Edge
The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations. Most of our members are located in the six-jurisdiction Greater Baltimore region, which consists of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. While the GBC is a leader in this important regional economic engine, our legislative and policy priorities are applicable statewide.

Our 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 be recognized as a leader in the global economy.

The GBC has a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems. As a 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.

On behalf of our more than 500 members, the GBC has many ongoing priorities. These include advocating for policies that create a more competitive business environment to attract new businesses, expand existing businesses, and create jobs and opportunities. Another priority is to build and nurture a highly-trained and educated workforce that meets the needs of today’s knowledge-based economy. Another key goal is to develop and promote a comprehensive and efficient regional transportation system capable of moving goods, services and the workforce.

For the 2018 legislative session, the GBC has identified the following top principles:

- Ensure the business tax climate remains fair, stable and predictable.
- Reduce homicides and violent crime in Baltimore City, employing a two-pronged approach that applies crime control strategies while simultaneously working to promote programs for Baltimore’s citizens, especially youth, which can prevent crime.
- Promote innovation and entrepreneurship through increased support for targeted incentives, workforce initiatives and a strong higher education system.
- Support policies that ensure the state’s workforce is comprised of well-trained workers at all skill levels that meet the demands of today’s employers.
- Provide for responsible and results-oriented school financing formulas and accountability measures.
- Advance initiatives that increase transparency and promote good governance.

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
President and CEO
Creating a More Competitive Business Climate

The creation of a strong and competitive business climate is among the most important roles of government leaders and policymakers. This is an area where government leadership unites with business as a partner. Job creation, a key outcome of a strong business climate, not only provides additional tax revenue, but new opportunities for citizens at all income levels. It is paramount that Maryland’s leaders make a competitive business climate part of a comprehensive policy approach.

➤ Ensure that the costs of doing business in Maryland are competitive with other states.
➤ Support strategic and effective state investments in initiatives that promote business growth.
➤ Support regulatory policies that are streamlined, stable and predictable.
➤ Support a strong economic development infrastructure focused on competitiveness that improves the business climate, creates jobs and cultivates entrepreneurship.
➤ Support a responsible minimum wage for entry-level and minimally skilled positions, as well as seasonal employment, on a statewide basis that is competitive with nearby states.

Building and Strengthening the Workforce

Preparing the workforce to be successful in tomorrow’s workplace requires innovative thinking, industry-specific training programs and specific career pathways. Policymakers should support legislation that ensures the state’s workforce is comprised of well-trained workers at all skill levels.

➤ Ensure school funding is adequate to prepare all students to achieve academic proficiency standards and succeed in post-secondary education and the workforce.
➤ Increase employer-based apprenticeships or certifications across many industries for students who do not wish to pursue a bachelor’s degree.

Source: GBC Report, Gaining a Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland
➤ Enhance workforce and career development programs that create more middle-skill job candidates.

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

➤ Encourage opportunities, training or education standards for Maryland’s growing Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) occupations and jobs.

➤ Create new pathways to employment opportunities for those returning from a period of incarceration (“returning citizens”) to reduce recidivism.

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

**Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

As Maryland competes to be a leader in emerging technologies and grow a strong entrepreneurial community, 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, require incentives to raise capital and advance their ideas, services and products to market.

➤ Increase state investment in innovation-related industries, including more money for workforce initiatives, job training and career development in bioscience, cybersecurity, healthcare information technology, education technology, medical devices and other cutting-edge fields.

➤ Create an angel investor incentive or similar program to provide capital for startup companies in a wide variety of industries.

➤ Expand the Maryland Technology Development Corporation’s early-stage investment fund that increases the availability of follow-on capital investments in technology startup companies and encourages these important companies to stay 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.

➤ Streamline and standardize the permitting process for installation of “small cells,” which are shoebox-sized antennas that can be affixed to traffic signals, buildings and street lights, to enable faster Internet download speeds, improved call quality and better wireless service.

**Ensuring Public Safety to Grow Jobs and Promote a Higher Quality of Life**

There is a direct relationship between public safety and job growth. In Baltimore City, violent crime and homicides threaten the hope and vision for a city with a strong residential base, growing middle-class, expanded city revenues and full utilization of its cultural and entertainment venues. It is critical that leaders join together in pursuit of a two-pronged approach that reduces violent crime while simultaneously addressing the root causes of crime.

➤ Commit to crime prevention investments, including improving educational attainment, offering high quality after-school and summer youth programs, investing in new recreational facilities, working to improve youth opportunities and increasing access to housing.

➤ Expand state funding for Safe Streets, a community-based program that seeks to prevent violence in specific neighborhoods through intervention by outreach workers.

➤ Encourage collaboration at all levels of government to find effective methods to prevent and reduce violent crime.

➤ Change multiple convictions of illegal possession of a firearm from a misdemeanor to a felony.

➤ 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 financial status.
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 obligations are being met without placing an undue burden on individual or business taxpayers.

➤ Oppose passage of combined reporting, which would negatively affect the corporate tax structure and diminish the economic vitality of our state.

➤ 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.

➤ Implement single sales factor apportionment for business with reasonable accommodations to particular industry sectors.

Advocating Growth-Oriented Transportation Policies

Employers and workers benefit from an interconnected multimodal transportation system that provides reliable ways to reach employment hubs. Policymakers should focus on strategic investments for roads and mass transit projects to 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.

➤ Support and advocate for investment in all modes of transportation.

➤ Support I-95 improvements in conjunction with development plans for Port Covington.

➤ Support funding for light rail connections to provide public transportation to Port Covington.
➤ Provide funding for transportation improvements and workforce development solutions to facilitate the reliable flow of goods to and from Baltimore-region assets such as Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport and the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore, including double-stack capability for the Howard Street Tunnel.

➤ Support increased funding for programs that improve the reliability of public transit and encourage commuting by transit, including transit signal priority, mobile payments, real-time tracking and the Guaranteed Ride Home program.

➤ Expand MARC service with an East Baltimore station and an improved West Baltimore station.

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

➤ Increase funding for safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure for transit and recreation.

Promoting Tourism as an Economic Development Driver

Tourism is a well-established economic driver of jobs, revenue and investment. Greater Baltimore’s tourism industry is an important part of the state and region’s 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.
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