2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Strengthening Maryland's Competitive Edge & Recovering from the Pandemic

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Regional business leaders creating a better tomorrow... today.
The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of more than 500 members, including businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and foundations.

Most members are located in the Greater Baltimore region, which consists of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties, and Baltimore City.

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. In short, the GBC focuses on economic growth and job creation.

Our organization has a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to challenges. As a private sector thought leader that collaborates with elected officials, top business CEOs, and nonprofit leaders, the GBC has the experience and expertise to advocate for policies that provide a competitive edge for Maryland. While the GBC is a regional organization, when it comes to policy and advocacy, our impact is statewide.

Grappling with the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the parallel challenge of overcoming systemic racism and injustice, the 2021 session of the Maryland General Assembly will be the most unique, and arguably most important, session in recent history. The primary focus of the 90-day session will be efforts to address economic recovery related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, the GBC has restructured and streamlined its annual priorities for this year’s legislative session to elevate the interventions needed across issue areas that are essential to ensuring a strong and inclusive economic recovery.

The GBC will engage actively in these and other major issues, including police reform and veto overrides of key education and public safety legislation. Aligned with the GBC’s organizational focus on advancing racial equity and social justice, we commit to reviewing all legislative proposals through an equity lens and to consider the impacts of proposed legislation on small and minority owned businesses, minority populations, and economically disadvantaged residents. The GBC will balance these considerations with the need to support a resilient economic development ecosystem that fosters opportunity for businesses of all sizes, maintains a competitive environment, creates a pipeline of highly skilled workers, and contains supportive infrastructure including a robust, multimodal transportation network.

The Greater Baltimore Committee looks forward to working with policymakers to advance bold, decisive measures to ensure the health, safety, and economic recovery of residents and businesses in Maryland. By working together to leverage our assets, advance inclusionary policies, and enhance opportunities, I am confident that Maryland will weather the current economic crisis and emerge stronger and more inclusive.

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See GBC’s report “Gaining a Competitive Edge: Key Pillars to Economic Growth and Job Creation.”
The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented economic pressure on businesses throughout Maryland, especially small and minority businesses that often lack the resources or capital to sustain a significant loss in revenue for an extended period. The pandemic has also elevated the challenge of child care access and the magnitude of the digital divide. It is imperative that Maryland’s elected leaders enact policies, programs and funding measures to ensure businesses can weather the pandemic and are positioned to recover once it has been contained.

- Enact liability protection for employers who adhere to federal, state, and local guidelines regarding reopening of businesses provided they are not grossly negligent in the conduct of business operations.

- Advocate for recovery resources that are directed to the most impacted industries, including restaurants, hotels, retail, tourism, and nonprofits.

- Support policies or programs to increase access to capital for small and minority-owned businesses including both traditional and non-traditional capital sources (CDFIs, PPP, venture capital, etc.)

- Replenish Unemployment Insurance (UI) funds while ensuring that UI policies do not create a disincentive for employees’ return to work or impose unreasonable added costs to business.

- Address child care challenges through targeted policy or funding innovations to address immediate shortage and create long-term solutions.

- Advocate for state dollars to assist efforts to bridge the digital divide including expanding broadband access and connectivity.
The creation of a strong and competitive business climate is among the most important roles of government. It is critical that 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 levels of the employment ladder. It is paramount that Maryland’s elected leaders make a competitive business climate part of a comprehensive policy approach.

- **Support policies** that ensure that the cost of doing business in Maryland is competitive with other states, including regulatory policies that are streamlined, stable, and predictable.

- **Support a strong and inclusive economic development ecosystem** that improves the business climate, creates jobs, and cultivates entrepreneurship.

- **Maintain state investment** in Maryland’s most innovative industries, including bioscience, cybersecurity, healthcare information technology, education technology, medical devices, and other cutting-edge industry sectors. Support and expand commercialization and technology transfer at the state's research universities.

- **Create an angel investor incentive** or similar program to provide capital for innovative startup companies.
Violent crime and public safety concerns threaten the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of our communities. Persistent violent crime rates in Baltimore City require strategic action by state and city officials. Policymakers must join together in a coordinated approach that reduces violent crime while simultaneously addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, joblessness, and a lack of education or workforce training.

- Strengthen laws and coordination of criminal justice agencies to prioritize focus on repeat violent offenders.

- Increase funding for programs that address trauma, addiction, and mental health, and provide access to rehabilitative treatment, education, and workforce training.

- Improve public accessibility to judicial data to increase transparency.

- Strengthen expungement provisions to increase opportunities for employment.

- Expand provisions to limit liability and provide incentives for employers who hire justice-involved individuals.

- Support evidence-based policies and programs to promote successful re-entry from incarceration and remove barriers to employment, including restrictions on access to education and training grants and scholarships, professional and occupational licenses, and housing.

- Support modifications to child support enforcement and driver’s license suspension to lessen barriers to workforce participation and support reforms to make automobile insurance more affordable and accessible.
Strengthen education and workforce systems to prioritize equity, accountability, and alignment with Maryland’s high-growth industry sectors

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

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

- Advocate for enhanced support for Career and Technology Education (CTE) and dual enrollment in high schools. Support work-based learning programs in all grade levels.

- Prioritize funding for early childhood education programs.

- Advocate for additional state funds for adult basic education and workforce training.

- Support policies and programs to increase registered youth and adult apprenticeships and internships.

- Advocate for increased funding for key workforce programs including Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN), registered apprenticeships for youth and adults, and Workforce Sequence Scholarships.

- Support dedicated State funding for wraparound services for students in K-12 education, community colleges, and workforce training programs.
Advocate for balanced transportation and mobility policy and funding priorities that create interconnected, multimodal transportation networks and promote equitable investment in systems across regions, modes, and communities.

Policymakers should strategically invest in interconnected multimodal transportation networks that actively contribute to economic growth, connect workers to employment, and move people and goods safely and efficiently.

- Advocate for additional state transportation funding for the Greater Baltimore region and oppose efforts to disproportionately direct State dollars to other regions in the State. Work to ensure that all capital and operating funding decisions are data-driven and examined through an equity lens.

- Advocate for consistent and adequate capital and operating funding levels for the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to ensure the safe and efficient operations of the current system and to reduce the multibillion dollar backlog needed to maintain the existing system in a state of good repair.

- Advocate for additional resources to support implementation of the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan.

- Prioritize funding for projects that provide enhanced multimodal connectivity to major workforce and distribution centers including the Port of Baltimore, BWI Airport, Tradepoint Atlantic, and Port Covington.

- Advocate for policy and funding to advance key MARC projects and to restore service cuts as workers return to the office during phased economic recovery.

- Support the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board’s analysis of MDOT and MTA’s governance and funding structures to identify opportunities for reform and to examine the feasibility of implementing a regional authority model.
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