

# 2024 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

BEAUFORT REGIONAL  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## OUR PRIORITY IS BUSINESS.

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce exists to promote economic prosperity to enhance the well-being of everyone in our region. Advocating on behalf of the Beaufort Region's employers with state, local and federal governments is essential to our mission.

The Chamber encourages elected officials to pursue these public policy priorities and will report to its members on outcomes that align with this agenda.

Public Policy Guiding Principles presented in this document are standing positions that inform the Chamber's advocacy efforts and preferred approach to policymaking. The Public Policy Agenda is updated annually and approved by the Board of Directors.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THE CHAMBER ADVOCATES FOR BEAUFORT COUNTY BUSINESSES AT [BEAUFORTCHAMBER.ORG/ADVOCACY](https://beaufortchamber.org/advocacy)

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# FEDERAL PRIORITIES

## MILITARY MISSION SUPPORT

- Fully fund the planned, new ambulatory care clinic at MCAS Beaufort and/or MCRD Parris Island.
- Appropriate funds to make infrastructure and facilities investments necessary to secure the second century of making Marines at MCRD Parris Island.
- Support location and construction of planned new VA Medical Center in Northern Beaufort County.
- Support timely annual passage of a national defense budget sufficient to ensure force readiness and counter global security threats.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Advocate for effective implementation and utilization of Opportunity Zones and similar economic development programs.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Maintain the current federal project waterway designation and physical navigation markers for the Port Royal Harbor Channel.
- Take no action that would reduce the usable runway length at Beaufort Executive Airport.
- Ensure the long-term solvency of the Federal Highway Trust Fund through sustained funding.

## TAX CLIMATE

- Support responsible fiscal policy, including entitlement reform, deficit reduction, and debt management.
- Oppose anti-growth tax proposals that disproportionately increase the tax burden on business owners.

# STATE PRIORITIES

## TOP PRIORITY

- Pass Fair Share Liability Reform (joint and several) to more reasonably reflect fault in tort actions to improve the state's insurance coverage requirements and overall legal climate.

## WORKFORCE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Increase the state's Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and support administrative changes necessary for Beaufort-area projects to compete successfully for credits.

## BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Explore opportunities to enhance the competitiveness of our state's tax climate, such as rebalancing the property tax burden on businesses.
- Explore incentives targeted to support recruitment and retention of high-impact corporate and technology jobs.
- Lower the individual income tax rate to bring SC more in line with other Southeastern states.

## HOSPITALITY SECTOR

- Support hospitality sector businesses by making consistent investment in high-impact tourism marketing by directing resources to local and regional destination marketing agencies.

## EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Seek solutions to expand the accessibility and affordability of childcare to ensure working parents may fully participate in the workforce.
- Increase base pay for teachers.
- Fund priority capital investments at USCB to provide facilities that enhance instructional and programmatic capacity.
- Continue to fund the South Coast Cyber Center's initiative to address maritime security challenges and build a cyber talent pipeline with NSA.DHS Centers of Academic Excellence at USCB and TCL.
- Institute policies to recognize "transferrable skills" from Military MOS to licensure requirements for Veterans and "transferrable credit hours" from Technical College Systems to four-year Universities for students.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Encourage state/federal delegations to expedite funding to widen I-95 to six lanes from I-26 to the Georgia state line.
- Support the increase of EV registration fees to help fund ongoing infrastructure maintenance costs.
- Explore funding opportunities for infrastructure to protect people, homes and businesses from stormwater and tidal flooding impacts.

# LOCAL/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Expedite deployment of Affordable Housing Trust Fund resources to build new obtainable housing units.
- Support public-private partnerships to create more workforce affordable housing.
- Advocate for policies and zoning that promote a diversity of housing types and price points.

## BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Streamline development processes to increase predictability and reduce time and costs.
- Oppose the imposition of developmental moratoriums when not linked to specific, achievable outcomes that align with the Chamber's policy principles.
- Challenge restrictive tax policies, fee increases, and regulations that further burden small businesses and hinder their potential.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Deploy all available resources to support the attraction, retention and expansion of industries that create high quality jobs and support economic diversification.
- Support investments necessary to ensure that the Beaufort Commerce Park is project-ready as certified by the SCDOC Palmetto Sites Program.

## EDUCATION

- Advocate for funding appropriations and programmatic improvements that enhance the quality of education from birth to Kindegraten and grades K-12 to support local education initiatives of youth in preparation for post-secondary school, military, or workforce opportunities.
- Support the advancement of Technical College of the Lowcountry and University of SC-Beaufort offerings and initiatives to prepare students for the workforce and ensure alignment with industry needs.

## HOSPITALITY SECTOR

- Support hospitality sector businesses by maintaining consistent investment in high-impact tourism marketing efforts and diversifying visitor segments.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Maintain and improve existing transportation infrastructure to enhance mobility, safety, and traffic flow.
- Fund and construct all transportation capacity and safety projects prioritized in the voter-approved 2018 penny referendum plan.
- Maintain and improve existing infrastructure and invest in new infrastructure to protect people, homes and businesses from stormwater and tidal flood impacts.

## LAND USE PLANNING

- Carefully balance land use decisions with responsibilities to protect historic, ecological and economic assets.
- Support property-owner rights in context with comprehensive land use plans.

## MILITARY RETENTION & EXPANSION

- Ensure that policies and practices are well-coordinated with the region's military installations and support retention and expansion of military missions.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Support advancement of workforce development efforts to benefit the region's businesses and employees, including policies, programs, and facilities that connect education to business and create a positive local environment for recruiting, upskilling, and retaining qualified workers by leveraging local, state, and federal funds.





# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Support incentives and market-driven solutions to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing options for everyone in the region.

## BUSINESS CLIMATE

Advocate for regulatory processes and business fee structures that are clear, predictable, efficient and cost-effective.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support tax policies and economic development programs that help the region attract, retain and expand businesses and industries that diversify the region's economy and create high quality jobs.

## EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Advocate for the changes necessary in early childhood, K-12 and higher education to prepare all students for the careers of the future and to provide a skilled workforce to support the region's employers.

## ENERGY

Support an energy regulatory climate that prioritizes the state's future energy needs with sufficient protections for electric utility ratepayers. Encourage energy generation from a variety of sources to produce reliable, affordable, sustainable electricity for the state's businesses and citizens.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The natural environment is important to our region's quality of place and economic competitiveness. Promote a balanced approach to environmental regulation that embraces responsible stewardship without unreasonably burdening businesses.

## HEALTHCARE

Promote community wellness by supporting policies that ensure access to quality medical care and reduce healthcare costs for businesses.

## HOSPITALITY SECTOR

Support consistent, sufficient investment in product development and tourism marketing to ensure the continued vitality of the region's hospitality industry.

## IMMIGRATION REFORM

Support comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level that helps businesses attract and retain talented individuals that fuel our globally connected economy.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Make investments necessary to ensure adequate capacity and maintenance of our transportation network and flood protections including roads, bridges, pedestrian and bike facilities, shoreline and stormwater infrastructure.

## LAND USE PLANNING

Support coordinated decisions among jurisdictions that promote the efficient use of land essential to economic prosperity.

## MILITARY RETENTION & EXPANSION

Advance legislative priorities in the South Carolina Military Base Task Force comprehensive plan, and support policies and investments that promote the retention and expansion of military operations in the Beaufort region.

## PORT DEVELOPMENT

Make investments necessary to enhance the efficiency, reliability and capacity of the region's port facilities and support development of the Jasper Ocean Terminal.

## TAX CLIMATE

Advocate for a competitive, pro-growth tax climate that ensures fairness, predictability, and compliance while balancing income, property and sales tax levies.

## TRADE

Support international trade agreements that are fair, accountable, consistent and that reduce barriers to free and open markets.