

# ISSUES *of*

The Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce works to promote and advance a vital, healthy business environment, advocating for public policy that will help our members and the 21 communities we serve to grow and prosper. Rather than simply react to what policy makers propose, the Chamber will proactively and strategically define its agenda and move it forward through our advocacy efforts.

## Healthcare:

*Health care remains a concern among employers as a significant cost of doing business, while this sector also serves, attracts and retains employees and business leaders in our region.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- Initiatives to support all sectors of healthcare services to recover from continued economic challenges.
- Strategies to reduce the cost of healthcare premiums for our members and their employees.
- Initiatives to engage local communities to provide access to evidence-based treatment for Mainers suffering from substance use disorder.
- Results focused work with healthcare organizations, higher education, policy makers and others to solve the shortage of nurses, physicians and entry level healthcare workers.
- Policies focused on social detriments of health including reducing poverty, food insecurity, domestic violence, crime and child abuse.
- Support adult workers caring for families by restoring access to the full continuum of senior healthcare services.

## Taxation & Policy:

*A heavy tax burden on Maine people and businesses discourages growth and impedes the ability to attract and retain professionals and their families to work and live in our region.*

## Housing & Neighborhoods:

*A diverse, affordable and sustainable housing stock, along with safe, vibrant and welcoming communities is critical to attracting and retaining workers and their families to our region.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- Initiatives to make communities, downtowns and neighborhoods safe and attractive to those who wish to live and recreate in the same communities where they work.
- Development of more housing options for individuals, families and retirees through rehabilitating aging housing stock and investments in new housing developments.
- Initiatives to develop new and innovative ways to build, heat and power homes and businesses.
- Smart and effective public policies, including state and local tax incentives designed to attract investment in our housing infrastructure.
- Policies and initiatives to assist the unhoused population find suitable and affordable safe housing.

### *The Chamber supports tax policies that:*

- Encourage business investment and growth, consistent with federal law so as not to further burden Maine businesses.
- Do not increase (and ideally reduce) the overall tax burden for Maine people and businesses.
- Make Maine more attractive for the recruitment and retention of residents and workers to meet the workforce needs of employers.
- Provide an incentive for retirees to stay in Maine as well as attracting others.
- Incentivizes the adoption of new technologies that reduce the cost burden to Maine people and businesses.
- Benefit the tourism and hospitality sector and its infrastructure.

## Education & Workforce Development:

*A continuum of lifelong educational opportunity and achievement is essential to the region's economic health and quality of life.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- Efforts and initiatives that provide access and reduce barriers to increase the number of individuals achieving credentials of value from pre-k to higher education.
- Creating opportunities for people of all ages to explore and pursue careers in our region through expanded program pathways, internships, experiential learning and apprenticeships.
- Collaboration between businesses, educational institutions and governmental agencies to encourage workforce development and training focused on the needs of employers.
- Coordination of post-secondary opportunities with economic development initiatives focused on the preservation and expansion of Maine's natural resource assets.
- Efforts to educate policy makers, leaders, communities and businesses on the use and impacts of AI.

## Child Care: *The Chamber supports:*

*Access to affordable and quality child care is necessary to ensure working families can remain in the workforce.*

- Initiatives at the local, state and federal level to support the creation of new and the expansion of existing child care facilities.
- Opportunities and incentives for employers to provide onsite child care.
- Expanding educational opportunities to increase the availability of child care providers and workers.
- Solutions that will allow existing child care providers to offer competitive wages and benefits to attract and retain workers.

## Connectivity & Communications:

*Broadband capacity and communication capabilities are critical to economic development and to the attraction and retention of businesses and workers to our region.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- Cost-effective policies and investments that will allow for greater permeation of high speed broadband to support residents, employers and remote workers, educational institutions, healthcare providers, tech based companies and home based businesses.
- Economic development strategies to attract companies and remote workers with a high demand for bandwidth, leveraging the infrastructure that is in place.
- Initiatives focused on improving digital literacy among residents and businesses to ensure everyone can effectively use available technology and resources.
- Promotion of regional collaboration between communities for shared resources including public/private broadband partnerships.

## Energy & Climate Change:

*An energy and climate change policy that encourages and facilitates lowering energy costs for Maine residents and businesses while protecting the environment.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- Reducing barriers to permitting, siting and construction of wind, biofuel, solar and geothermal technologies.
- Strategies, programs, policies and incentives that encourage businesses and homeowners to weatherize and upgrade to more efficient heating, cooling, lighting and refrigeration systems.
- Improving energy infrastructure through investments in energy storage, transmission and distribution networks.
- Policies and initiatives that address the effects of climate change by seeking cost-effective solutions for Maine businesses and people.

## Social Equity Impact:

*Addressing social issues in our region is critical to fostering a healthy, vibrant, productive community and workforce.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- Embracing a culture of and continuing education focused on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility with our members and community.
- The integration of service members, veterans, individuals in recovery, justice involved and those with disabilities into our communities and workforce.
- Initiatives that welcome new citizens and families to our region while assisting them with their transition.
- Programs that provide community members with opportunities to engage with and contribute as volunteers and workers.

## Innovation & Entrepreneurship:

*The future of our region's economy and workforce is tied to investments in innovation, research, development and commercialization.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- Increasing investment in research, development and commercialization.
- Converting research into new businesses and jobs by supporting business accelerators, incubators and related programs.
- Attracting and retaining students for future jobs through investments in modern STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, math) educational facilities.
- Efforts to create, develop and promote an environment that fosters entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Opportunities for young entrepreneurs to help them develop as leaders and foster a social network to support their growth.

## Transportation & Infrastructure:

*A robust transportation system and investments in infrastructure supports economic growth, spurs job creation, enhances the quality of life and attractiveness of our region.*

### *The Chamber supports:*

- A comprehensive state plan including infrastructure investments for the repair, maintenance and expansion of roads and bridges.
- Public transportation, pedestrian and recreational amenities that enhance the livability and attractiveness of our region for all residents and visitors.
- Supporting the operations and expansion of the Bangor International Airport including passenger, freight and ground services.
- Preservation, upgrading and expansion of transportation options including bus, rail and ports.
- Expansion of the availability and infrastructure to support electric vehicles.