

Waterbury Regional Chamber 2026 Legislative Agenda



Chairman of Public Policy
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Focus On Economic & Business Development Must Continue

The Waterbury Regional Chamber, its affiliates, Naugatuck Chamber, Watertown Oakville Chamber, and the Southbury Chamber, and our members expect that our elected officials will continue to focus on economic growth, business attraction and retention, and workforce challenges during the 2026 legislative session.

Below is the Chamber's legislative agenda outlining the key priorities and objectives for the State in 2026. Additionally, there is a comprehensive overview of the specific legislative changes, innovative concepts, and programs that our chamber advocates for, encompassing both regional and local levels.

<p>TAXES & SPENDING</p> <p>Support maintaining fiscal guardrails, managing surpluses responsibly, reducing debt, and avoiding new taxes, while promoting service-sharing, nonprofit partnerships, and targeted incentives that strengthen the workforce, encourage investment, and lower long-term costs.</p>	<p>LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Support coordinated workforce efforts, industry-focused training, and reforms to paid leave and CT FMLA, while opposing expanded mandates. Promote resident-first hiring, portable training requirements, and policies that reduce burdens on employers and strengthen Connecticut's workforce.</p>	<p>EDUCATION & CHILDCARE</p> <p>Support expanding early childhood funding, strengthening career-focused graduation pathways, and maintaining investment in technical and manufacturing programs, while promoting STEM and trade training to ensure students gain the skills needed for post-secondary careers and Connecticut's future workforce.</p>
<p>MANUFACTURING</p> <p>Continue to support regional sector partnerships, expanded apprenticeship opportunities, and collaboration with statewide manufacturing organizations, while backing key initiatives and funding that strengthen innovation, training, and promotion of manufacturing careers to grow Connecticut's manufacturing workforce and competitiveness.</p>	<p>HEALTH CARE</p> <p>Support strengthening local healthcare systems, expanding affordable insurance options, and reducing burdens such as the hospital tax, while backing fair reimbursement, Medicaid reforms, sector partnerships, and sustained behavioral health funding to ensure high-quality care and long-term stability for the region.</p>	<p>PUBLIC SAFETY</p> <p>Support stronger collaboration with public safety leaders, increased funding for behavioral health response, and reforms addressing repeat and juvenile offenders, while advocating updates to the Police Accountability Act to better support effective law enforcement and protect community safety.</p>
<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Support revitalizing downtown Waterbury and surrounding communities, strengthening local business districts, and advancing policies that improve the regional business climate, while maintaining investment in programs like the SBDC to drive growth and support small businesses.</p>	<p>TOURISM</p> <p>Support strengthening Connecticut's tourism economy by expanding marketing efforts, increasing funding for statewide and regional tourism initiatives, promoting arts and cultural organizations, and engaging fully in the Connecticut Tourism Coalition to sustain growth, and identifying sustainable revenue sources to fund tourism initiatives.</p>	<p>ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Advocate for a pathway to a diverse energy generation resource mix in Connecticut. Energy cost is a key differentiator in the competitiveness and expansion of Connecticut's economy.</p>
<p>REGULATORY REFORM</p> <p>Continue supporting the CBIA ReimagineCT Policy Pledge, improved licensing recognition for new residents, careful monitoring of emerging data privacy rules, and a two-year suspension of costly unfunded mandates to reduce burdens on small and mid-sized businesses.</p>		<p>TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Support expanding and modernizing key transportation corridors, advancing the I-84/Route 8 NewMix replacement, improving last-mile connectivity, and prioritizing rail and infrastructure upgrades, while maintaining essential bus services to strengthen mobility across Greater Waterbury.</p>

TAXES & SPENDING

- Maintain integrity of the "Fiscal Guardrails"
- Eliminate the temporary corporate tax surcharge
- Expand the use of nonprofit organizations to deliver state services
- Continue to pay down the debt of the unemployment compensation fund
- Responsible management of the record budget surplus
- Oppose new business taxes and tax increases
- Eliminate overtime and mileage in pension calculations
- Leverage councils of governments to share services and take advantage of federal grant opportunities to reduce property taxes
- Support tax policies that encourage investment in job creation and apprenticeships
- Create tax incentives for STEM students at Connecticut colleges and universities to accept employment in Connecticut upon graduation
- Support replacing collective bargaining for state employee contracts with administrative branch negotiation & retain required approval votes by both legislative chambers
- Advocate for fair farmland tax assessment policy based on Connecticut farming economic values and capping increases. Include farmer representation in any legislative study or working group for policy development and review.

LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Seek reforms for paid sick leave
- Support the increase in collaboration between education, workforce development and business member stakeholders
- Oppose unemployment benefits for striking workers
- Educate policymakers on the impact of minimum wage on workers as they approach the “benefits cliff” of the social safety net
- Preserve the integrity of Regional Industry Sector Partnerships and the tailored workforce development programs based on industry-specific needs
- Oppose expansion of workers’ compensation benefits
- Oppose predictive scheduling policies
- Support requiring state contractors to hire Connecticut residents first
- Support the portability of worker’s sexual harassment certification training
- Advocate for hardship exemptions for small employers from CT FMLA

EDUCATION & CHILDCARE

- Increase funding and subsidies for early care and education programs, allowing childcare centers to open additional classrooms
- Align graduation and school accountability index requirements to focus on career readiness and provide new paid internship opportunities
- Maintain funding for vocational-technical schools and for advanced manufacturing programs at CT State Naugatuck Valley and other community colleges
- Support policies and initiatives that promote STEM and trade training opportunities for a post-high school career
- Support efforts of the Waterbury Public Schools and UConn Waterbury’s robotics program in order to build a more robust manufacturing employment pipeline

MANUFACTURING

- Continue to support the Northwest Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership
- Overhaul workforce apprenticeship hiring ratios to boost manufacturing and trades job growth
- Support initiatives of the Legislature’s Manufacturing Caucus
- Support CT Center for Advanced Technology and funding for the Manufacturing Innovation Fund and other programs
- Support working with the CT Manufacturing Collaborative to develop ways to support manufacturers in Connecticut
- Support the Chief Manufacturing Officer’s efforts to expand promotion of and training for manufacturing careers in the state

HEALTHCARE

- Allow for trade associations and chambers of commerce to aggregate membership and offer small businesses access to affordable, high quality health insurance options for employee healthcare
- Continue to support the Northwest Healthcare Regional Sector Partnership
- Advance policies that support fair reimbursement and investment for the hospitals in Waterbury to ensure access to high-quality care
- Support policies that ensure the healthcare infrastructure in greater Waterbury remains available to support the entire community and region
- Reduce the burden of the “hospital tax” to keep millions of dollars in the greater Waterbury area
- Convene a group of stakeholders to work with the state to produce a comprehensive plan to mitigate the exponential growth in the Medicaid program
- Support measures that strengthen Connecticut hospitals and health systems and recognize their vital importance to the economy and health of local communities
- Support requiring the state to strictly follow federal Medicaid reimbursement rules and guidelines and reject cost-settling on a “fee for service” rate-based reimbursement system
- Maintain current funding levels for behavioral and mental health care and defend against further reductions
- Support a two-year moratorium on new insurance mandates

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Expand collaboration between community business leaders and local CGA Public Safety and Security Committee
- Increase funding for local law enforcement on-scene behavioral health services
- Reexamine treatment of repeat and juvenile offenders to ensure the safety and wellbeing of law-abiding citizens
- Support the reconsideration and modification of the Police Accountability Act of 2020 to better support law enforcement

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Support downtown Waterbury revitalization efforts, including efforts to revitalize the central business district
- Support economic development efforts to revitalize Naugatuck, Southbury and Watertown/Oakville
- Support Main Street Waterbury and its mission to revitalize the city’s downtown
- Support legislation to enhance the business environment across the Greater Waterbury region and each municipality’s development efforts
- Maintain the state’s investment in the Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Promote biotech growth through added lab space

TOURISM

- Continue to support jobs and enhance efforts to market Connecticut as a tourism destination
- Support further state and local involvement in the Connecticut Tourism Coalition
- Support the Arts & Culture Collaborative of the Waterbury Region
- Increase funding toward statewide marketing and tourism districts
- Identify a sustainable source of funding for tourism initiatives from current revenue collected from the tourism/hospitality industry

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Support expanding access to renewable energy investments and maintaining strong energy-efficiency programs, while advocating transparency in energy costs and backing projects that protect local waterways and enhance regional environmental assets.
- Make business investments in renewable energy more attainable by eliminating savings ratio requirements for related capital projects
- Promote new biotech industries by incentivizing the creation of more lab space
- Support full funding and current structure of the CT Energy Efficiency fund
- Support the Waterbury Naugatuck River Greenway Project and protection of the region’s waterways
- Advocate for the full transparency of all charges on energy bills
- Advocate for overall brownfields policy review and for creation of new tools, i.e. tax credits and other tax relief incentives, to expedite and further leverage brownfield redevelopment opportunities in Connecticut.

REGULATORY REFORM

- Continue to support CBIA ReimagineCT Policy Pledge.
- Monitor new data privacy provisions aimed at small and medium sized businesses
- Recognize equivalent out-of-state licenses for those moving here
- Support a two-year suspension of costly unfunded state mandates

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support lane expansion and increased safety measures on I-84 from Waterbury to Danbury
- Enhance transportation project visibility and improve last-mile options
- Support on-time replacement plans for the I-84/Route 8 NewMix project
- Prioritize & fund infrastructure maintenance and repair projects complete improvements to the Waterbury rail line
- Maintain funding for evening bus service in Waterbury and approve matching funds needed to support bus service on Lakewood Road and in the city’s South End