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Legislating During A Pandemic

As 2021 begins, the state and nation are still struggling with the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. The Waterbury Regional Chamber; its affiliates, the Naugatuck Chamber and the Watertown Oakville Chamber, and our members remain hopeful that the pandemic will subside, but we nonetheless urge members of the state House and Senate to fulfill their roles in having a voice in determining policy and regulatory changes. We implore the Legislature and Gov. Ned Lamont to acknowledge the tremendous impact the pandemic has had on business & industry in the state, and to recognize that the pandemic is the economy and enact policies that not only help them survive but thrive as the economy recovers.

Below are the Chamber's 2021 Pandemic and State Policy Objectives; on the back are specific changes and programs we support, including those at the regional and local levels.

2021 PANDEMIC POLICY OBJECTIVES

<p>FINANCIAL AID</p> <p>Leverage federal aid for programs that include grants, tax credits and deferrals, to help at-risk business sectors — including bars & restaurants and lodging — survive during the pandemic.</p>	<p>REGULATION</p> <p>Develop regulations and policies that promote safety for consumers, employees and employers, while working with stakeholders to balance the impact on businesses' ability to survive.</p>	<p>LABOR, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION</p> <p>Focus workforce development and training on key sectors, including manufacturing & healthcare; provide relief on unemployment compensation rates.</p>	<p>HEALTHCARE</p> <p>Support COVID-related investments for testing, equipment, vaccines, etc., as well as regulatory changes in areas such as telehealth.</p>
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2021 STATE POLICY OBJECTIVES

<p>TAXES & SPENDING</p> <p>Reduce the cost of government by controlling state employee wage and pension costs; create tax policies that encourage business investment and job creation; replace collective bargaining on state employee contracts with administrative branch negotiation & keep required approval by legislative branch.</p>	<p>LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Develop policies that promote creating and retaining jobs and reduce administrative costs; adequately fund, but without bonding, demonstrably successful workforce development/training programs.</p>	<p>EDUCATION</p> <p>Support equitable funding for public institutions of higher education, while working to reduce costs and improve efficiencies; create a balanced approach for public, private, for-profit & nonprofit post-secondary schools.</p>
<p>MANUFACTURING</p> <p>Prioritize funding for STEM/trade education and training; adequately fund programs that support manufacturing jobs & incumbent-worker training.</p>	<p>HEALTH CARE</p> <p>Support policies that improve quality and access to care while reducing the cost of care; prioritize funding for mental health & addiction services.</p>	<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM</p> <p>Support transportation-oriented development initiatives; continue to support Brownfields remediation efforts; support jobs & enhance tourism revenue by properly funding state marketing efforts.</p>
<p>ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Adequately fund programs that help reduce energy usage and cost; support remediation & redevelopment of brownfields; adopt any additional changes recommended by the Transfer Act Working Group.</p>	<p>REGULATORY REFORM</p> <p>Reduce or eliminate unnecessary/outdated regulations to promote business development & job creation; eliminate piecemeal approach to requirements that drag out permitting & approval of projects.</p>	<p>TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Prioritize & fund infrastructure maintenance and repair projects; complete improvements to the Waterbury rail line</p>

Waterbury Regional Chamber Supports CBI's Rebuilding Connecticut Pledge



PROTECT. SUPPORT. RESTORE.
Connecticut's Workforce

The Waterbury Regional Chamber supports the efforts outlined in the Connecticut Business and Industry Association's Rebuilding Connecticut Pledge, including those for small business relief, urban renewal, workforce development, taxpayer ROI and Infrastructure investment.

Legislators and business owners can read and sign the pledge online at <https://www.rebuildct.com/>

WATERBURY REGIONAL CHAMBER 2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

TAXES & SPENDING

- Oppose new taxes and tax increases;
- Deliver greater value to taxpayers by expanding the use of nonprofit organizations to deliver state services, implementing broad-based technology solutions, cutting duplicative state functions and eliminating overtime and mileage in pension calculations;
- 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;
- Restore the long-term financial sustainability of the state's Unemployment Trust Fund by adopting benefit reforms already implemented as best practices by neighboring states;
- Repeal the 6.35% state sales tax on employment training and safety apparel, including personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Restore the pass-through entity tax credit to its original 93%;
- Restore the R&D tax credit to attract entrepreneurs, foster startups, and promote private-sector investment;
- Support replacing collective bargaining for state employee contracts with administrative branch negotiation & retain required approval votes by both legislative chambers.

LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Oppose expansion of workers' compensation benefits;
- Tailor workforce development programs to prioritize high-value, in-demand industries, and focus on defined pathways for educational and career development;
- Support a review of/updates to apprenticeship hiring ratios;
- Support requiring state contractors to hire Connecticut residents first.

EDUCATION

- Maintain funding for vocational-technical schools and for advanced manufacturing programs at Naugatuck Valley Community College and other community colleges;
- Align school curricula with industry-sector workforce needs;
- Support efforts to promote Allied Health four-year degree program at UConn Waterbury;
- Fully fund Educational Cost-Sharing grants to school districts.

MANUFACTURING

- Maintain funding for the Manufacturing Innovation Fund;
- Maintain funding for apprentice training & development and remove barriers for apprenticeship training requirements;
- Support expanding the apprenticeship tax credit to C corporations and pass-through entities;
- Support initiatives of the Legislature's Manufacturing Caucus;
- Support initiatives to promote STEM/manufacturing careers, especially to students in elementary & middle schools;
- Support working with the CT Manufacturing Collaborative to develop ways to support manufacturers in the Connecticut;
- Support the state Chief Manufacturing Officer's efforts to expand promotion of and training for manufacturing careers in the state.

HEALTH CARE

- Support measures that strengthen Connecticut hospitals and health systems and recognize their vital importance to the economy & health of local communities;
- Support fully funding Medicaid reimbursement and increase provider reimbursement rates;
- Support requiring the state to strictly follow federal Medicaid

- reimbursement rules & guidelines and reject cost-settling on a "fee for service" rate-based reimbursement system;
- Maintain current funding levels for behavioral health care and oppose further reductions;
- Use Waterbury's model for healthcare spending reform to reduce state retiree healthcare costs;
- Support a two-year moratorium on new insurance mandates.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

- Support downtown Waterbury revitalization efforts, including Main Street Waterbury's efforts to revitalize the central business district;
- Support Naugatuck's efforts to revitalize its downtown;
- Support economic development efforts to revitalize Watertown/Oakville downtown;
- Maintain the state's investment in the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to ensure quality counseling & technical support remains available to small businesses;
- Support the Arts & Culture Collaborative of the Waterbury Region.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Support continued state investment in Brownfields remediation, and work with our Congressional delegation to ensure federal funding is available;
- Restore the \$165 million removed from the state's energy efficiency programs;
- Support expediting environmental permits required for business starts and expansion;
- Drive much-needed investments in our cities & towns by overhauling environmental remediation statutes and regulations, streamlining permitting, cutting red tape, and conforming state rules to federal standards;
- Support the Waterbury Naugatuck River Greenway Project and protect the region's waterways.

REGULATORY REFORM

- Recognize equivalent out-of-state licenses for those moving here;
- Streamline the professional licensing process;
- Support a two-year suspension of costly unfunded state mandates;
- Support eliminating unnecessary/outdated regulations and streamlining permitting & approval processes
- Support prohibiting the state from altering approved contract terms without renegotiation.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support developing a Multi-Modal Transportation Center and improvements to the Waterbury Rail Branch 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;
- Support Naugatuck's transportation-oriented development plans and proposed rail improvements for the Port of Naugatuck, including purchasing new train passenger cars;
- Support a bipartisan transportation funding plan that provides the necessary resources to rebuild and modernize the state's infrastructure while protecting the Special Transportation Fund;
- Prohibit diverting gas tax revenue and/or toll/user fees from the Special Transportation Fund;
- Leverage public-private partnerships to speed planning and completion of priority transportation projects, additional infrastructure projects such as critical bioscience laboratory space, and revitalize and grow the state's economy.
- If tolls or user fees are approved, support:
 - Limiting the number and location of highway tolls;
 - Offsetting toll/user fee revenue with a corresponding reduction in the motor fuels tax;
 - Allowing toll/user fee exemptions or tax credits for first responders and medical caregivers;
 - Providing waivers for in-district and out-of-district school transportation, as well as for contractors of state DCF, DDS and DMAS.

For more information or questions on the Legislative Agenda, visit www.waterburychamber.com, call 203-757-0701, or email info@waterburychamber.com