

# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

*The 2019 – 2020 legislative session on Beacon Hill began on January 1, 2019 with the filing more than 6,000 pieces of legislation.*

*The Springfield Regional Chamber has set its agenda as outlined in this brochure and will update members throughout the session. Member input is encouraged and welcomed.*

## **Budget / Tax Policy**

The Chamber will focus on how revenues are prioritized, spent and will monitor any potential income or other tax increases which could impact business. Areas include:

- Income Tax. The Chamber will oppose any increase in the income tax on business.
- Stabilization Fund: The Chamber will encourage rebuilding this Fund to a fiscally responsible level of \$5 billion and ensure its use only in dire circumstances.
- Gateway Cities. The Chamber will support adequate funding needed for programs to address the specific needs of these cities with an emphasis on funding programs which meet labor market demand.
- Local Aid. The Chamber will advocate for adequate funding of local aid.
- Bond Rating. The Chamber will support the maintaining of the state AA+ bond rating.
- Cannabis Taxation. The Chamber will monitor revenues to ensure funding is being used appropriately for regulatory, social and enforcement expenses.

## **Workplace Issues**

The Chamber works hard to make the region competitive when it comes to the costs of doing business and will continue its advocacy to ensure it remains so, including:

- Paid Family/Medical Leave. The Chamber will monitor this issue and advocate as appropriate to ensure reasonable implementation for the business community.
- Independent Contractors. The Chamber will encourage reforms to better reflect the current economy, encourage entrepreneurialism and incent business growth.
- Treble Damages. Massachusetts law requires all payroll violations be charged treble damages, even those made in error. The Chamber will continue to advocate a return to the statute's prior language which allowed impartial judges to limit penalties for mistakes and penalize only those who "willfully" violate the law.
- Wage "Theft". The Chamber vigorously supports our existing laws that guarantee that workers are paid what they are due. The Chamber opposes, however, legislation that would shift legal responsibility for "wage theft" committed by one business to another business that did not employ the affected worker(s).

## **Health Care**

The cost of health care and access to its coverage is a priority for the Chamber. The Chamber will focus its efforts on:

- Employer Medical Assistance Contribution (EMAC): The Chamber will advocate for the expiration of the temporary increase in EMAC and the supplemental contribution at the end of calendar year 2019 pursuant to the legislation or when funds have consistently exceeded targets, whichever comes first.
- Mandated Benefits. The Chamber will continue to review areas for cost containment and oppose mandated and/or expanded benefits that are not evidence based and whose costs exceed their value.

- Provider Reimbursements. The Chamber will advocate for appropriate commercial Medicare, Medicaid and Disproportionate Services Hospital payments so as not to penalize our health care providers or drive up costs to the commercial markets.
- The Federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). The Chamber will continue to follow changes to the Act and advocate at the state and/or federal level in order to avoid negative impacts to the health care system in Massachusetts.

### **Energy**

Energy is a critical issue for the Chamber and, as such, the Chamber will:

- Comprehensive Strategy. Advocate for a comprehensive energy strategy which includes a balanced energy portfolio, development of alternative renewable energy sources, expansion of the supply of natural gas and conservation and energy efficiency measures.

### **Workforce Development**

The Chamber believes that all students should leave the school system with the knowledge, skills and experiences they will need in the 21st century. To that end, the Chamber will:

- Funding. Advocate for modernizing the state school funding formula and coupling it with reforms that ensure educational investments close the racial and socio economic achievement gaps.
- Reforms. Advocate for the protection of existing educational reforms and oppose the rollback of these measures.
- Talent. Support innovative programs and services which expand educational opportunities linked to labor market demand.

*To participate in the legislative process, contact any member of the Legislative Steering Committee or Chamber President Nancy Creed at (413) 755-1309 or [creed@springfieldregionalchamber.com](mailto:creed@springfieldregionalchamber.com).*