



## Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

*Driving Business Forward.*

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### MEMO

**To:** Members of Delaware County Chamber of Commerce and Legislative Delegation Membership at Large

**From:** Government Affairs Committee

**Date:** January 8, 2025

**Subject:** 2025/26 Policy Priorities for Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

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### Mission Statement

The advocacy mission of the Delaware County Chamber is to promote the growth and development of the regional business community by advocating for positive and permanent business-friendly government laws and regulations, effective communication with our elected officials, and the development of strategic partnerships to accomplish these objectives.

### Improved Tax Structure & Pro Economic Development Policies

Pennsylvania's tax structure contains some of the highest rates and most restrictive provisions in the country and our corporate tax laws are uncompetitive when compared to the rest of the nation. Across-the-board reforms and reductions in business taxes are necessary to stimulate economic development and create jobs. For these reasons, the Chamber would be opposed to any tax increases or expansions, in particular to the Sales Tax and any reforms that shift the burden to small businesses. In addition, the Chamber supports pursuing policies that maintain local control over tax revenues and other funding sources, focuses on reinvestment of those resources into the local communities and infrastructure (below), and reducing unfunded mandates imposed on our local municipalities from the state and federal level that otherwise divert local resources and constrain municipal and school district budgets.

In addition, the Chamber supports adequate funding of economic development and tourism programs that attract and retain job creators to the region and state.

### Improving Costs and Access to Health Care

Making insurance more affordable and accessible to small businesses will encourage entrepreneurs to expand their workforce and benefits packages. The Chamber is concerned about the viability of our healthcare institutions, one of the county's largest employment sectors. Indeed, Delaware County hospitals and health care systems, like all of America's hospital and health systems continue to deal with unprecedented challenges, including, but not limited to workforce shortages, increasing supply chain costs, underpayment by Medicare and Medicaid, rising cost of prescriptions, and an increase of regulatory burdens and administrative requirements, to name a few. Elected officials of all levels need to work together to advance policy that supports our health sector by providing regulatory relief and ensuring adequate payment for services. All residences and businesses should have access to high-quality care and affordable, comprehensive health insurance coverage.

### Support of Critical Infrastructure and Pro Energy Policies

Utility costs can be a significant portion of business operations, and the Chamber supports policies that promote continued access to a diverse, reliable energy portfolio. The continued redevelopment of our county refineries on items such as supporting their pro-reform position on the federal Renewable Fuel Standard and access to energy infrastructure such as pipelines, hydrogen, and nuclear energy generation will ensure that Pennsylvania remains a leader in the energy industry. Additionally, the Chamber supports the encouragement of pro-growth policies for our Commonwealth's energy sector by

reducing regulatory hurdles to the utilization and implementation of infrastructure while ensuring appropriate environmental protection and sustainability.

Public Transportation is a key element of the economy of Greater Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, promoting mobility, equity, and environmental sustainability. SEPTA and transit systems across the Commonwealth are at a critical juncture and need urgent investment by government partners to meet current and future demands, especially as the southeast region prepares to host thousands of visitors in 2026 for FIFA World Cup Soccer and the multitude of events surrounding the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Pennsylvania lawmakers must take urgent action to increase funding for transit operating and capital programs to preserve safe, affordable, and reliable public transportation services.

- Increase the allocation of state sales tax receipts to support public transportation operations statewide as federal COVID-aid is exhausted. This is not a tax increase but will ensure that the Governor's proposal to increase transit funding advances and additional sales tax revenues are dedicated to transit systems statewide to accelerate transformation and avoid an eventual death spiral of reduced service, increased fares, job losses, and traffic congestion
- Authorize new state and local matching funds to secure large federal competitive grants that can fund one-half of capital project costs and help advance projects of regional significance, from Trolley Modernization to new regional rail cars to service expansion.

The Chamber also recognizes that water and wastewater systems are important to infrastructure and community well-being. Pennsylvania funding referendums, potentially supplemented by federal initiatives, should be monitored to ensure that water and wastewater infrastructure supports commercial/industrial development initiatives.

Next, the Chamber supports policies that incentivize broadband providers to continue investing in the networks that are critical to the movement of commerce, ideas, and information via wired networks.

Finally, the Chamber is an advocate for improved permitting timelines and regulations because punitive policies can result in increased project time frames and substantial costs – delaying or deterring economic growth and job creation.

### **Training, Education, Workforce Development & Human Services**

The Chamber supports policies and funding that encourage businesses to locate and grow in Pennsylvania. Southeast Pennsylvania has underserved human capital and infrastructure needed for job creation and economic growth. Investments in early childhood education, including affordable PreK, childcare, and higher education for working and job training adults, are among the most effective tools a community can utilize to promote economic development and workforce development. Constant training is a critical human capital process concerned with identifying future needs, developing a productive workforce, examining the skills of employees at all levels, and determining both strengths and skill gaps. Due to this, the Chamber supports programs that emphasize technical abilities, business skills, trades, vocational schooling, and higher education that focuses on workforce needs.

In addition, many of our employers have experienced negative impacts to their workforce caused by the aftermaths of the COVID pandemic and the ongoing opioid crisis. Thus, the Chamber supports initiatives that address these crises in an effort to bring employees back into the workforce as properly trained productive and healthy employees.

The Chamber supports an increase in the rates paid by the state to critical human services agencies, especially if the state adopts any increase to the minimum wage. Our membership feels that any minimum wage increase should not be applied to entry-level, student, and seasonal workers, but a living wage should be considered by the state for professional direct care workers with human services agencies.

### **Local Economic Vitality**

Local government and its policies often have more impact on our communities than federal or state legislation, especially pertaining to the economic vitality of a region and on the business community within a municipality. As was shown throughout the pandemic, partnerships between local businesses, the Chamber, and our municipalities are key to a thriving regional economy. This partnership can flourish by focusing on the following:

- Working to keep taxes low with fiscally responsible spending; and more modern, flexible tax options that keep up with inflation.
- Adopting comprehensive plans that include business priorities and focus on economic vitality.
- Engaging professional and informed staff who do not apply selective measures to the business community but recognize the importance of local employers to the county's success.
  - Several of the Chamber's municipal members and partnerships can serve as a model. They have implemented permitting processes that are transparent, set clear expectations with efficient timelines, and provide an overall positive experience to ensure that business community applicants satisfy municipal guidelines.
- Enacting and implementing appropriate land use regulations to allow businesses to locate and grow in Delaware County, with ordinances and regulations that keep up with changing state law and do not unintentionally supersede it, such as with the various amendments to the Municipal Code and Ordinance Compliance Act.
- Ensuring municipalities do not enact ordinances that supersede state laws, especially regarding the Municipal Code and Ordinance Compliance Act.
- Revitalizing business and shopping districts, including providing available, affordable public parking, safe access to public transit, and increased bike/pedestrian access.