

2025 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



The Springfield Regional Chamber stands proudly on a foundation of legislative advocacy designed to support policies that create a thriving economy in our region. Through the work and dedication of dozens of industry experts, the Chamber has built the following member driven legislative agenda for the 2025-2026 session.

BUDGET TAX POLICY

FEDERAL FUNDING: Advocate for the inclusion of fair and equitable federal funding to support our region's cities and towns.

STATE BUDGET: Support fiscally sound legislation and policy which rebuilds the Stabilization Fund and identifies opportunities for revenue-enhancing measures, while opposing new broad-based taxes which would hinder the region's economic recovery.

- **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE:** Continue to advocate for unemployment insurance system reform and oppose any increase in tax that shifts the burden of repayment to businesses and taxpayers.
- **EMERGENCY SHELTER FUNDING** Continue to advocate for immigrant shelter reform and oppose any increase in tax that shifts the burden of funding to: businesses and taxpayers.

LOCAL AID: Advocate for fair and equitable funding for local aid.

TAXATION: Monitor all proposed changes to tax policy and advocate for those that would enhance the region's competitiveness, promote job creation and catalyze economic development. Continue to advocate for an increase of the estate tax exemption to ensure that Massachusetts is more in line with other states.

FAIR SHARE TAX: Advocate for regional equity in the allocation of all new revenues collected to the identified priorities of transportation and education.

HEALTHCARE

The Chamber recognizes that increasing access to timely, affordable, and preventative healthcare services is a critical factor in the long-term ability of the western Massachusetts community to prosper, and endorses the following positions, all of which support access to healthcare.

HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE: Reduce administrative burdens by developing reasonable and timely licensing and credentialing procedures. Support and encourage programs that create accelerate pathways for health care and human service professionals, specifically primary care providers and specialists.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: Recognizing the growing need for behavioral health services, the Chamber will support evidence-based legislation and policies that expand access and appropriate funding to these services.

HEALTH CARE COSTS: Support legislation and policies that help ensure affordability and transparency and oppose mandated and/or expanded benefits that are not evidence based and whose costs exceed their value.

HEALTH EQUITY: Support legislation and policies which address racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and sexual orientation and gender identity disparities in our region, with a consistent regulatory structure to collect data.

PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENTS: Advocate for appropriate commercial, Medicare, and Medicaid payments so as not to penalize our regional health care providers or drive-up commercial insurance costs.

FEDERAL AND STATE OVERSIGHT: Monitor legislative, regulatory and fiscal changes to the health care system, and advocate at the state and federal level in order to avoid negative impacts to the health care system in our region.

ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

ENERGY: Advocate for a comprehensive energy strategy which maintains sufficient and equitable capacity and affordability for continued growth of the region's business community, including development of alternative renewable energy sources, ensuring a safe, reliable and adequate supply of natural gas and electricity, and continued conservation and energy efficiency measures.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Support legislation and policies that provide fair, equitable and responsible investments in the maintenance and development of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, rail and bus, and further investments in telecommunications and broadband that will preserve and strengthen the regional economy and its communities and catalyze economic development. Advocate for policies that create a balance between our important energy goals and our need to create more housing of all types.

ENVIRONMENT: Support responsible policies to protect our environment without adding unreasonable or inequitable cost burdens on the region's business community.

HOUSING

HOUSING CREATION - PRESERVATION: Encourage and support the creation of new housing and the preservation of existing housing of all types, with a focus on low income and affordable units, throughout Hampden County. Support the adaptive reuse of commercial and/or government owned properties into housing of various types.

PUBLIC HOUSING REHABILITATION: Encourage and support programs that foster the rehabilitation of public housing units in Hampden County.

BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT: Work with local communities as well as state and federal officials to remove the barriers to housing creation and rehabilitation including updating zoning regulations and informing and influencing public opinion on certain types of housing.

HOUSING FUNDING PROGRAMS: Support programs that encourage home ownership including first time home buyer programs and programs that offer incentives to low-income and/or marginalized members of our community as well as supporting tax incentives and other funding resources to foster investment in new and/or existing housing.

ENERGY GOALS: Support programs that encourage energy efficiency in newly created or rehabilitated housing units of all types.

WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE: Continue to advocate for the modernization and reform of the state's unemployment insurance system and minimize changes that would increase costs for employers, particularly around the \$2.1B deficit due to the error that improperly utilized federal funds for state unemployment benefits during the pandemic.

PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE: Monitor and advocate for system reform to address accountability, functionality and the detrimental impacts on the business community in the form of financial burdens and fraud/abuse that results in operational disruptions.

WORKFORCE TALENT: Support legislation and policy recommendations that promote the development of a more ready workforce with an emphasis on creating opportunity and removing barriers to employment and advancement.

EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS: Advocate for legislation and policies which support and strengthen educational opportunities for learners of all ages:

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:** Advocate for affordable, accessible, stable, high-quality early childhood education for all families in our region.
- **ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION:** Advocate for policies that maintain high educational standards for all Massachusetts students.
- **POST-SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION:** Support legislation that creates pathways to success and builds a well-educated workforce that addresses the future needs of the region.