“THE BEST WAY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE IS TO CREATE IT.”
OUR FOCUS

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

HUMAN RESOURCES & HEALTH CARE

TAX & REGULATORY AFFAIRS

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

As Fierce Advocates for Business, Our Purpose is a Thriving & Prosperous West Michigan for All.
GAME-CHANGING ADVOCACY

The Chamber’s Government Affairs team is working with members to continue our momentum in West Michigan through our aggressive and effective push for legislative action on issues that impact your bottom line and our community.

The Chamber is proud to be a leading advocate on the issues that matter to our members: a talented Michigan, strong infrastructure and a vibrant business climate.

The following priorities for the 2019-2020 legislative session were developed for and by Chamber members. You can expect the Grand Rapids Chamber to lead this member-driven advocacy agenda forward to make our region and Michigan’s tomorrow even better than today.
YOUR GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS TEAM

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EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Advocate for evidence-based policies that develop a strong talent system from a holistic, birth through career approach.
EDUCATION (EARLY CHILDHOOD, K-12 AND POST-SECONDARY)

• Support policies that encourage high quality public-private partnerships, are equitable, and advocate for investment based on evidence
• Support efforts to launch and expand diverse learning options and career pathways (i.e. skilled trades, STEAM, dual enrollment, virtual learning, place-based learning programs, school of choice/charter schools, competency-based learning)
• Advocate for transparent accountability and the use of a consistent state assessment that is cost efficient, equitable, rigorous, and aligned with the Michigan State Standards and is comparable to other states

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

• Ensure the workforce development funds are driven by current and forecasted regional employer demand and support increased funding for workforce training dollars to evidence-based programs, (e.g. Going Pro Talent Fund, Marshall Plan for Talent)
• Support initiatives that help remove barriers to employment such as childcare, ESL, mental health needs, and mobility, and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion
• Support and participate in the efforts that encourage connection and collaboration between education and business via internships, apprenticeships, and other experiences
• Support policies that will attract and retain talent to our region, including supporting veterans, returning citizens, and immigrants
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

Advocate for regulations that improve Michigan’s business climate while being protective of our environment.
TOP PRIORITIES

- Ensure that any updates to the Part 201 cleanup criteria are based on reasonable and realistic conditions and sound science
- Ensure the appropriate implementation of the Environmental Rules Review Committee and the Environmental Permit Review Commission
- Ensure that the state’s increased focus on drinking water, including but not limited to addressing emergent chemicals, is based on best science and reasonable and realistic conditions and is not overly burdensome on the regulated community

AIR

- Advocate for the reasonable development and implementation of policies as they pertain to air permitting, compliance, emissions fees, and enforcement
- Ensure that the MDEQ does not promulgate rules in response to ozone and other criteria pollutant attainment status redesignations that are stricter than federal requirements or that are unreasonable considering the federal delegation

GOAL:

Air-quality regulations should promote clean air through reasonable and obtainable standards that do not place an undue burden on the business community or limit economic growth.
GOAL:

Comprehensive sustainable materials management programs that measure progress while increasing landfill diversion rates, will provide feedstocks, opportunity for economic development and enhance Michigan’s ability to attract and retain job providers while protecting the environment.

WASTE & RECYCLING

• Support comprehensive sustainable materials management strategies including waste minimization, conversion, composting, reuse, and recycling programs consistent with the following:
  • Benchmarking and measuring progress – encouraging all organizations and businesses to effectively track diversion rates and efforts
  • A comprehensive strategy to divert valuable discards from landfilling while not placing unfair burden on businesses
  • Develop strategic partnerships and markets to attract investment for collection and processing infrastructure in the region – support opportunities for businesses to reduce costs by using recycled commodities
• Support adoption of Part 111 rules amendments that incorporate the federal Hazardous Waste Generator Improvements Rule and the new federal Definition of Solid Waste rule
ENERGY

- Support a Michigan energy policy that improves the competitiveness of Michigan businesses by maintaining electric choice, focusing on policies that keep energy costs competitive, and providing adequate and reliable energy
- Oversee the fair and reasonable implementation of Michigan's renewable energy and energy waste reduction standards
- Support policies that ensure a reliable and adequate energy supply through traditional and renewable energy sources and innovative technologies

GOAL:
The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce has supported policies, such as the preservation of electric choice, that improve the competitiveness of Michigan businesses. Going forward, energy policy should continue to improve the competitiveness of Michigan businesses consistent with the energy priorities.
WATER

- Support responsible, cost-effective solutions to stop and prevent the spread of invasive species in the Great Lakes
- Support Grand River restoration efforts
- Support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- Ensure that the state’s increased focus on drinking water, including but not limited to addressing emergent chemicals, is based on best science and reasonable and realistic conditions and is not overly burdensome on the regulated community
- Support maintaining the EPA’s delegation of authority to the MDEQ for regulating wetlands
- Support stormwater regulations that are consistent with law, reasonable and science-based and do not do any of the following:
  - Place an undue burden on businesses or communities
  - Encourage unnecessary urban sprawl
  - Create fees/taxes that encourage municipal abdication of stormwater investment
  - Lack transparency and public accountability and participation
- Support only reasonable and science-based regulations related to the protection of drinking water

GOAL:
Protecting Michigan’s unique water resources in a reasonable and cost-effective manner will provide health, quality-of-life, and economic benefits for Michigan’s job providers and residents.
REMITICATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

- Ensure that any updates to the Part 201 cleanup criteria are based on reasonable and realistic conditions and sound science
- Support the continued causation-based liability standard under Part 201
- Advocate for an internal administrative reorganization and other changes inside MDEQ between Part 201 remediation and Part 111 (hazardous waste) corrective action to create greater consistency and certainty for the regulated community
- Support cost effective and consistent remediation practices and processes that do not impose unreasonable burdens on business and are streamlined, based on realistic conditions, and protective of the environment so that more contaminated property can be put to productive use
- Support reasonable and fiscally responsible policies that encourage redevelopment and remediation that remove blight and contamination

GOAL:
Remediation processes should be reasonable, consistent and efficient in order to maximize opportunities for redevelopment.
REGULATORY REFORM

- Support performance-based management practices and metrics to track performance within the MDNR and MDEQ
- Ensure the appropriate implementation of the Environmental Rules Review Committee and the Environmental Permit Review Commission
- Oppose excessive new or additional environmental fees or surcharges by state and local governments and ensure that all environmental fees support the related program
- Oppose regulations that are unnecessarily burdensome on the regulated community, oppose state regulations that are stricter than a corresponding federal standard unless they are proven uniquely necessary to protect Michigan's environment
- Support stronger consistency and efficiency across state government on cleanup projects and in other processes

GOAL:
Efficient, consistent, and customer-friendly regulatory agencies are critical to creating outcomes that benefit all of Michigan.
HUMAN RESOURCES & HEALTH CARE

HUMAN RESOURCES
Advocate for fair and affordable employment laws. The Chamber believes employers should have the flexibility to manage their workforce and employees’ needs—with limited governmental involvement or regulation.

HEALTH CARE
Advocate for reforms to make health care more affordable by supporting state and federal efforts that enable employers to provide cost-effective health care benefits and expand flexibility, transparency, competition and choice in the health insurance marketplace.
HUMAN RESOURCES

- Advocate for expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity
- Ensure the solvency of the state’s unemployment compensation trust fund by opposing efforts to expand unemployment benefits
- Oppose increases in workers’ compensation benefits and oppose establishing a new tax, fee or surcharge on workers’ compensation
- Oppose government wage and other mandates that hinder economic growth (e.g. federal overtime regulation, paid sick leave, minimum, living and prevailing wage). Advocate for and protect Michigan’s Right to Work Act, which provides employees freedom from being forced to join a union against their will
- Advocate for reforms that help employ formerly incarcerated citizens while protecting an employer’s ability to ask questions or consider, either on a job application or in the interview process, whether a prospective employee has a conviction record, pending charges or is currently unemployed
HEALTH CARE

- Advocate for Medicaid reforms to reduce the cost-shift to the private sector by ensuring appropriate payment by the government, promoting the redesign of Medicaid benefits, and increasing individual recipient responsibility for health status

- Advocate for improvements to the Affordable Care Act, particularly in the area of cost containment, expanded flexibility for states to control health care costs, and repeal of the most burdensome regulations, mandates and costs

- Advocate for access to affordable primary and behavioral and mental health care, following best practices for chronic disease management, prevention and education, advanced care planning and care coordination, utilizing evidenced-based community health concepts

- Advocate for policy changes that emphasize the important role of transparency and choice, especially in benefit plan design and oppose additional health care benefit mandates

- Bring public employee health care costs and benefits in line with private sector realities, thereby lowering an excessive financial burden on taxpayers

- Advocate for the Certificate of Need process and reforms that will effectively balance cost, quality and access, recognizing that health care does not operate as a truly free market since more than 50% of health care consumers are served by the government

- Advocate for market-based policies to increase transparency and reduce the cost of prescription medications

- Advocate for medical liability reform to reduce the impact of defensive medicine

- Advocate for individuals to have equal tax deductions as employers for health insurance
TAX AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS

Promote a simple, fair and efficient business tax system while eliminating unnecessary regulations to encourage private sector job growth, making Michigan the premier place to locate and grow a business while supporting thriving communities.
TAX POLICY
• Support the elimination of the Personal Property Tax for all taxpayers
• Oppose the expansion of the sales and use taxes on services
• Pursue efficiencies at all levels of government that help reduce the costs and tax liability of businesses and individuals

REGULATION
• Eliminate unnecessary regulations and support reforms that make it easier to start and operate a business

TAX ADMINISTRATION
• Advocate for a customer service-oriented Department of Treasury
• Advocate for reforms that improve government transparency
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Advocate for reforms that promote the efficient movement of goods and people, reduce transportation barriers, and maintain our infrastructure assets to make West Michigan businesses more competitive.
INFRASTRUCTURE
- Support appropriate funding to return Michigan's infrastructure to a state of good repair
- Support fair and sensible distribution of funds statewide to all modes of transportation including public transit and airports
- Support infrastructure investment as a top priority for new or growing state revenues
- Support policies to promote regional collaboration and planning, strong asset management, and transparency in transportation infrastructure, wastewater, stormwater and drinking water systems
- Support specific projects and policies that enhance the transportation of goods and people in our region
- Support greater access to efficient and reliable intermodal opportunities in West Michigan, including enhanced rail, port and air facilities

MOBILITY
- Support The Rapid exploring a significant redesign process that includes employer engagement to support a 21st century workforce and prioritizes high-frequency, certainty and direct connections
- Advocate for Michigan to be the national leader in the development of autonomous vehicle technology
- Support meaningful private-sector engagement in local and regional transportation and mobility planning

TRANSPORTATION WORKFORCE
- Support workforce development efforts to address the critical shortages of truck drivers, mechanics, logistics and supply chain professionals, technicians and more within the industry