



## GREATER READING CHAMBER ALLIANCE

### 2017 Pro Business Policy Agenda

Approved Board 2016-2017

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance serves as the voice for business at all levels of government. We represent business and community interests and viewpoints on current issues facing the Greater Reading Region utilizing our established Policy and Position Process. We build effective relationships with our elected officials to be part of the process and promote our pro-business policy agenda focused on our economic vibrancy. Encourage lawmakers to build on recent progress and address the following areas of public policy that are our legislative/regulatory priorities. With these priorities in place, it is also GRCA's intent to continue to lead, advocate, educate and inform members on the various issues that will affect them.

#### **Modern, Safe and Efficient Transportation and Infrastructure System**

Having a robust transportation system for the Greater Reading region is vital to our ability to attract and retain quality businesses to benefit our economy and citizens. To facilitate the free flow of goods and commerce, assure the mobility and safety of our citizens, and maintain the foundational services necessary for manufacturing and commerce, we must maintain adequate and reliable infrastructure systems, including transportation and utilities, that are adequately funded and incorporate greater efficiencies in their construction and/or reconstruction and delivery, including, but not limited to, streamlined permit and regulatory processes.

#### **Building a Career-Ready Workforce**

Economic viability and long-term prosperity depends upon a well-educated workforce. Education and training are the key components in productivity, economic competitiveness, and workforce development. The GRCA will facilitate and support business and education partnerships utilizing Workforce Talent Pipeline Investors and Berks County Chamber Foundation to pursue initiatives and programs to close the skill gap and meet employers' requirements. We will facilitate workplace experiences and learning by engaging businesses, educators, post-secondary education institutions, students and employees to build a promising workforce for the future. We will advocate for workforce development legislation and funding. Lifelong learning is vital for workers in a consistently evolving economy, and the GRCA supports workforce development programs that have clear performance criteria and are targeted to the employment needs of the business community.

#### **Improving the Business Tax Structure**

Pennsylvania's corporate taxes and tax rate continue to put the Commonwealth at a competitive disadvantage. Comprehensive tax and spending reforms at both the local, state and federal level are necessary to stimulate economic development.

#### **Responsible Budget and Government Spending**

We encourage a budget that will not place any burdensome taxes or raise current taxes for business and industry. The GRCA supports efforts to fairly address unfunded liabilities and provide for long term solvency of pension programs along with adequate workforce and transportation funding. We support efforts to identify and consider privatizing government services that could be more efficiently conducted by the private sector.

#### **Balanced Labor and Employment Laws and Regulations**

Several labor policy reforms are necessary to address abuses and facilitate a fair work environment for both employees and employers. Many of the laws and regulations that dictate labor relations and employment policy are outdated. We will strive to relieve businesses of restrictive regulations and help members prepare for, navigate, and implement new regulations effectively.

#### **Energy Independence and Science-Based Environmental & Regulatory Requirements**

Unnecessary mandates and requirements on energy bring less system flexibility ultimately leading to higher costs. The GRCA advocates that any proposed environmental laws, regulations and government mandates should be based on thoughtful, science-based development and consider the cost of implementation as it relates to actual benefits.

#### **Affordable and Accessible Health Care**

Health-care costs continue to rise and businesses want to be able to offer appropriate health-care benefits to their employees. We will work through the implementation process of federal health-care reform with policymakers to maintain a high level of quality care, while working to control costs of insurance and related reporting requirements.

#### **Streamline Business Expansion and Community Development**

Provide leadership for our members and community by developing programs that educate and involve the next generation of community leaders. Establish an open dialogue to enable business and local/county/state government/agencies to align on a process to smoothly respond to expansion and development that provides positive economic benefit in our region. Promote our business resource partners and make business and community members aware of resources available to support them.