



2024

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS

The Chamber's 2024 Legislative Agenda was designed based on input from our annual legislative survey, member feedback, and our core advocacy committees. The political landscape in New York State makes business advocacy an uphill battle and that's why it's more important than ever that our members utilize the platforms we provide such as lobby days, networking events, and press conferences to make their voices heard in Albany and Washington.

The Chamber will continue to advocate for a pro-growth and pro-business agenda that ensures all Upstate businesses have the resources and support they need to be successful.

Last session, Chambers across the state lobbied the legislature to lower taxes, reject burdensome regulations and to help our elected officials recognize the struggles our businesses are facing daily. In 2023, the Chamber opposed several dangerous pieces of legislation that if signed into law, would have raised business costs significantly, created duplicative reporting requirements, and subjected employers to unnecessary lawsuits. Through our advocacy efforts we stopped the following priority bills:

- New York Health Act
- Extended Producer Responsibility
- Twenty First Century Antitrust Act
- Employee Lien
- Good Cause Eviction

While each of these bills were successfully blocked in 2023, we are prepared to stand firmly against their passage, should they advance this legislative session.

To expand our advocacy efforts and provide adequate representation for all of our member businesses, the Chamber has launched its first committee designed to support our Minority, Women, Veteran Business Enterprises (MWVBE), also known as the "Arrows Committee". Through this committee, Chamber staff and subject matter experts will offer our MWVBE's, many of which are small businesses, with much needed resources and access to critical skills training programs.

The Chamber is proud of the bipartisan support and relationships we have developed across all levels of government and will continue to utilize these partnerships to help our member businesses grow. We are dedicated to continuing these important conversations with our elected leaders and advocacy partners across the State to help revitalize our local economy.

Contact Mina Hoblitz at mhoblitz@greaterbinghamtonchamber.com if you're interested in getting involved with one or more of our core advocacy committees.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

JON SARRA

Chairman of the Board

Hinman, Howard & Kattell, LLP

STACEY DUNCAN

Chief Executive Officer

Leadership Alliance

GREG LESKO

Chairman of the Government Affairs Committee

Lesko Financial Services

Brett Pennefeather, Eck Plastic Arts

Brett Pritchard, Pritchard Development Corporation

Christina Dolan, United Health Services, Inc.

Christopher Hutchings, Smith Brothers Insurance, LLC

Cindy Armstrong, Tompkins Community Bank

James O'Brien, Bothar Construction, LLC

Jason Aurelio, Sentry Alarms

Jeff Smith, Binghamton Baseball Boosters

Jeff Wood, McFarland Johnson, Inc.

Joe Mirabito, Mirabito Energy Products

Joe Rusin, New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG)

Kenneth Kamlet, Hinman, Howard & Kattell, LLP

Maureen Wilson, Pyramid Brokerage

Megan Curinga, Hinman, Howard & Kattell, LLP

Melissa Hackford, Greater Binghamton Association of Realtors (GBAR)

Michael Fosbury, Columbian Financial Group

Patricia Shermot, Visions Federal Credit Union

Robert Warholic, Essential Constructs

William Hoffman, NBT Bank

greaterbinghamtonchamber.com/advocacy

SAVE THE DATE!

Join the Chamber on Friday, March 8, 2024, for the Chamber's annual Legislative Agenda Rollout & Local Advocacy Day. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with their local, state, and federal elected officials and staff.

REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

HOUSING

The Chamber supports the building of quality housing options at target price points in desirable neighborhoods for all community members.

The Chamber is committed to driving collaborative initiatives with county-wide stakeholders focused on the long-term economic sustainability of Broome County. With major state and federal investments in battery manufacturing and Binghamton receiving an official “Tech Hubs” designation, housing will be a key component dictating the success of projects like Micron. While issues related to housing are not new, we are at a pivotal moment in time when housing across all levels (affordable to high end) is necessary for the advancement of various industries in our community.

The Chamber Supports:

- Tax incentives to assist developers with the costs necessary to build affordable, market-rate, and high-end housing.
- Funds to assist with the cost of maintaining and renovating existing and outdated housing stock.
- Shovel-ready housing initiatives, which help fund the infrastructure costs (sewer/water, roads/sidewalks, etc.) associated with building residential properties.

Rent Control/Stabilization: The State passed a rent reform package in 2019 that shifted the landscape for tenants and landlords tremendously. Upstate communities can now opt into NYC style rent stabilization that harms investments to our housing stock and reduces the incentives to revitalize aging housing that was previously available to smaller landlords. The Chamber will advocate for housing policy that encourages growth and reinvestment into our current housing stock.

Good Cause Eviction: Good Cause Eviction is another form of rent control that would “prohibit the eviction of residential tenants or the non-renewal of residential leases without good cause”, meaning landlords would have to issue automatic lease renewals except in limited circumstances and would have to justify proposed rent increases in court. The eviction moratorium made it extremely difficult for landlords to remove problem tenants who violate the terms of their lease, and this legislation only furthers this burden.



ENERGY

The Chamber will fight for affordable and reliable energy that can keep our businesses safe and allows them to remain competitive.

The Community Leadership and Climate Protection Act (CLCPA) was signed into law in 2019. This legislation requires New York to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 85% of 1990 levels by 2050. It also requires 70% of statewide electricity be sourced from renewables by 2030 and to go carbon free by 2040.

To achieve the goals of the CLCPA, New York State will have to work to build more infrastructure and make significant investments into the grid to make electric buildings and vehicles a reality. Despite the business community's calls for a regional cost analysis, there is still insufficient information available about the true cost and feasibility of the CLCPA.

The Chamber believes that CLCPA implementation should be done with as little cost to the business community as possible. With over 500,000 New Yorkers leaving New York State in 2022, the legislature must be aware that continued costs passed on the ratepayer to fund transmission upgrades will only continue to drive more businesses out of NY.

In addition, many of our businesses compete with companies in lower taxed states like Pennsylvania and Florida, therefore, we need to support statewide energy policy that is both affordable and reliable to ensure New York remains attractive for businesses looking to start up or move to our community.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber supports employer led talent pipelines to meet the real demand of employers locally.

The Chamber of Commerce will continue to advocate for policies and initiatives that will reduce workforce barriers such as Childcare and Transportation.

The Chamber's affiliate organization, the Greater Binghamton Education Outreach Program (GBEOP), continues to foster business-education relationships to develop and inspire a dynamic local workforce. GBEOP will continue to work with local educators (K-12) to identify opportunities to partner and facilitate programs that will address the career readiness needs of the graduating class of 2024, while promoting career exploration for students at all grade levels.

The Chamber will continue to host Talent Initiatives programs that provide professional development opportunities for the current workforce. Talent & Leadership programs work to enhance our diverse local talent and increase employee retention.

To address workforce shortages:

- The Chamber is supportive of initiatives that keep low level or first-time offenders out of prisons and get them into the workforce. Employment for someone with a prior criminal record typically reduces recidivism and is beneficial to the well-being of our community. The Chamber will support initiatives based on the voluntary cooperation of employers in our region.
- The Chamber is supportive of efforts to connect migrants with employers looking to fill open positions in our community.
- The Chamber is supportive of increased funding to support our educational institutions that specialize in preparing students for careers in critical fields like healthcare and the trades.

TAXES & SPENDING

The Chamber believes that government has a responsibility to use its resources effectively to decrease the tax burden on residents and businesses.

Year after year, New York State has exercised little to no fiscal restraint, having passed a \$229 billion budget in FY 2023, which is \$9 billion more than FY 2022. In just three years, the state budget has increased by nearly \$17 billion.

According to the *World Population Review*, New York is ranked #1 of the state's with the highest overall tax burden. This puts areas like the Greater Binghamton Area that are only miles away from the Pennsylvania border at an extreme competitive disadvantage.

The Chamber will advocate for fiscal responsibility such as decreased spending, lower taxes and the consolidation of services.

The Chamber Supports:

- Reforms to lower taxes for residents and business owners.
- Initiatives that consolidate or eliminate ineffective or redundant government services and programs.
- Maintaining the 2% property tax cap. With inflation on the rise, and the State's, Property owners cannot afford any further tax increases.

MANDATES & EMPLOYER REGULATIONS

The Chamber is supportive of efforts to eliminate burdensome regulations that make doing business in New York unnecessarily difficult.

Unemployment Insurance: Statewide business organizations continue to urge our elected officials to use unallocated covid relief aid or discretionary dollars to pay down the state's \$6.9 billion debt owed to the federal government. With 35 other states having used covid relief aid to pay down their UI trust fund balance, we feel it is imperative that our legislature take similar steps to take the onus off of employers. In addition, the interest assessment surcharges associated with the state's UI debt, are costing employers thousands of dollars annually and FUTA rates are continuously climbing year over year. The State must put funds towards replenishing the fund rather than looking to business for a bailout.

In addition, we support the Unemployment Trust Fund Accountability Act in the United States House of Representatives, which would direct states with outstanding balances of \$1 billion or more to submit to the Secretary of Labor a report detailing how they plan to repay their federal advances. We believe this legislation would hold our state accountable for the decisions the legislature made without the input of the business community.

Extended Producer Responsibility: Current EPR proposals would shift recycling costs of end-of-life packaging materials such as glass, metal, paper and plastic products from municipalities onto businesses. Under such proposals,

businesses would be mandated to join producer responsibility programs within one year of implementation which would require them to be solely responsible for funding the collection and processing of their recycled materials. On average, this legislation would increase a family of four's monthly grocery costs by \$36-\$54 or by \$684 per year. York University estimates that this program would "result in \$800 million direct costs for the industry, with the potential of an additional \$2 to \$3 billion impact on the New York State economy".

21st Century Anti-Trust: The proposed legislation would modify the State's current antitrust laws to make New York one of the first states in the nation to adopt an "abuse of dominance standard". The terms "market dominance" and "size of market" in this proposal are poorly defined and as a result could subject businesses small and large to various lawsuits as well as criminal penalties for having a "presumptive dominance" of 30-40% of a market. Furthermore, this proposal would establish a pre-merger notification requirement and 60-day review process with the NYS Attorney General's office for businesses worth \$9 million or more in assets. There are currently no other states or countries in the world that have this long of a review period. The Chamber opposes any legislation that would cause hardworking small businesses to undergo

unnecessary litigation that reduces competition and stifles innovation and growth.

SWEAT (Employee Lien): The Chamber is opposed to SWEAT also known as the “employee lien”, which incentivizes employees to secure liens on their employer’s personal and company property for alleged wage and hour violations. This legislation is redundant as the state and federal government already have existing measures in place to protect employees from such violations.

Paid Family Leave/Bereavement Leave: New York State is on its 7th year of Paid Family Leave. The current benefits include 12 weeks of paid leave at 67% of the employee’s average weekly wage. In 2024, the maximum weekly benefit is \$1,151.16 which has continued to increase each year. In addition to the weekly benefit, the employee contribution rate continues to increase on an annual basis.

As the cost for this program increases, the Chamber will continue to stand against attempt to shift the cost of Paid Family Leave onto the employer.

Permanent Paid Sick Leave: In 2020, the State passed legislation that would require all New York employers with five or more employees or net income of more than \$1 million to provide paid sick leave to their employees. This law has presented many challenges for companies in our community who are grappling with the additional cost of doing business while also managing significant labor shortages. This mandate is particularly difficult to comply with in industries like construction where wages fluctuate significantly based upon the location of the work.

Project Labor Agreements: A Project Labor Agreement (PLA), is a pre-hire collective bargaining agreement between trade unions and contractors that establishes the terms and conditions of employment for a specific construction project. The Chamber is opposed to PLA’s as we believe they are anti-competitive, prevent non-union local businesses from bidding on public projects and unnecessarily drive-up costs for New York taxpayers.

Predictive Scheduling: Placing restrictions on the ability of employers to change employee work schedules makes it extremely difficult for businesses to be flexible at a time when their ability to adapt is critical to their survival. Under previously proposed predictive scheduling laws, the employer is punished for work schedule changes by having to pay a fine to the employee for schedule changes. Compliance with these types of laws is very difficult, especially in sectors that have fluctuating workloads such as retail and restaurants. The Chamber opposes any onerous scheduling mandates proposed by the State of New York.

Prevailing Wage Expansion: In 2020, Prevailing Wage expansion passed to include projects that receive incentives of more than 30 percent of construction costs and the costs exceed \$5 million. The Chamber opposes any proposals that attempt to alter the prevailing wage law to capture more projects or lower thresholds.

Scaffold Law: Scaffold Law requires an absolute liability standard on gravity related construction accidents. This law was once intended to champion safety but making the employer 100% liable for all gravity related accidents has the reverse effect. This law stifles development in our community and costs taxpayers approximately \$800 million annually. The Chamber supports repealing the Scaffold Law and replacing it with a comparative negligence standard in order to spur more development in our area.

Worker’s Compensation: Certain reforms such as reductions in the annual workers’ compensation assessment rate have been implemented, however, worker’s compensation costs still remain high in New York putting us at a competitive disadvantage to States like Texas or Virginia. It is important that common sense reforms continue to be put in place to further improve the system and reduce rates.

Local Government Mandates: Unfunded mandates that are passed down from the State limit our local governments and put strain on our communities. The Chamber will fight against additional mandates that increase costs for local governments. The property tax cap is a good policy but must be coupled with mandate relief.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber will champion economic development processes that build capacity for economic growth and match the needs of the business community.

The Chamber supports:

- Efforts to increase the number of good paying jobs available in our community
- Programs that provide support to existing businesses
- Tax incentives to attract private investments and new industries to the region
- Investments in employer-led workforce development programs

What steps can the state and federal government take to reach these goals?

Expand Transportation: Employers and employees alike identify limited access to transportation as a critical workforce barrier. Public transportation schedules need to match the needs of employers. The Chamber will continue to work to find solutions to this problem including creative private-public partnerships that will allow workers to overcome this barrier.

Broadband Access: The Chamber is supportive of initiatives to streamline broadband deployment access to low-income

families and rural communities. In addition, the Chamber supports efforts to improve high-speed broadband competition that leads to increased consumer options, better service quality, and affordable prices.

Revitalization: To see a true resurgence across Upstate NY, downtowns must be an area of key investment. Empty buildings and vacant lots should be either torn down or repaired to help bring a sense of order and community to an area. The Chamber strongly supports community revitalization efforts and we have really begun to see the fruits of these projects across Broome County.

IDA Legislation: Oppose attempts to make IDA's less effective at promoting local economic development through efforts that limit PILOT timeframes, increase the scope of prevailing wage, and efforts to take New York State out of the site election process for future industry attraction.

Infrastructure: Improving utility infrastructure including roads, water, sewer, electricity, and gas will be important as new businesses consider our area for investment.

HEALTH CARE

The Chamber will support healthcare policies that increase affordability and access to coverage.

A frequent concern of our membership is the high cost of healthcare coverage in New York State. The Chamber of Commerce believes that affordability and quality are two necessary components of a strong healthcare system. The best way to achieve this is through a gradual approach and sustained efforts, not through a government takeover of the health insurance industry.

New York State is approaching universal coverage through an existing public-private partnership that provides over 95% of New Yorkers with medical coverage. If passed, the New York Health Act would raise taxes by approximately \$160 billion (which is almost half of the entire statewide budget in 2022) in the first year alone. If Medicaid reimbursement rates are used under a single payer system, our local hospitals will lose significant revenue. These funding gaps make investing in

innovative technologies to expand and improve healthcare access much more difficult. The State should take steps to approach 100% coverage and promote cost saving measures without abolishing private insurance as this legislation would do.

The Chamber supports efforts to produce a sufficient talent pipeline for the healthcare industry, including funding for employer-led workforce development programs and support for our local nursing program. Since the Pandemic, dire staffing shortages have negatively impacted patient's access to reliable health care. Expanding clinical training capacity is a key component to assuring that doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals have the capacity to meet our community's health care needs. A healthy community is critically important to maintaining a productive workforce and a thriving community.

2024 GREATER BINGHAMTON LEGISLATIVE DIRECTORY

Federal

U.S. SENATOR - CHARLES SCHUMER

313 Hart Senate Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202.224.6542
schumer.senate.gov

U.S. SENATOR - KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

478 Russell Senate Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202.224.4451
gillibrand.senate.gov

CONGRESSMAN - MARC MOLINARO

DISTRICT NY-19
Washington DC Office
1207 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202.225.5441

Binghamton District Office
49 Court Street, Suite 210
Binghamton, NY 13901

State

GOVERNOR - KATHY HOCHUL

State Capital
Albany, NY 12224
518.474.8390 | governor.ny.gov

SENATOR - PETER OBERACKER

DISTRICT 51
District Office
4030 West Road
Cortland, NY
13045
607.758.9005

Albany Office
188 State Street
LOB 506
Albany, NY 12247
518.455.3131
oberacker@nysenate.gov

SENATOR - LEA WEBB

DISTRICT 52
District Office
44 Hawley Street
Room 1607
Binghamton, NY
13901
607.773.8771

Albany Office
LOB 805
Albany, NY 12247
518.455.2170
lwebb@nysenate.gov

ASSEMBLYMAN - JOE ANGELINO

DISTRICT 122
District Office
1 Kattelville Road,
Suite 1
Binghamton, NY
13901
607.648.6080

Albany Office
LOB 549
Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5741
angelinoj@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYWOMAN - DONNA LUPARDO

DISTRICT 123
District Office
44 Hawley Street
Room 1704
Binghamton, NY
13901
607.723.9047

Albany Office
LOB 828
Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5431
lupardod@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMAN - CHRISTOPHER S. FRIEND

DISTRICT 124
District Office
1250 Schweizer Road
Horseheads, NY
14845
607.562.3602

Albany Office
LOB 938
Albany, NY 12248
518.455.4538
friendc@nyassembly.gov

County

COUNTY EXECUTIVE - JASON T. GARNAR

60 Hawley Street
6th Floor
Binghamton, NY 13902
607.778.2109
gobroomecounty.com/countyexec

LEGISLATIVE CHAIR - DANIEL J. REYNOLDS

60 Hawley Street
6th Floor
Binghamton, NY 13902
607.778.2109
gobroomecounty.com/legis

