



GREATER
BINGHAMTON
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2025

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Fighting for a Stronger and More Resilient Greater Binghamton

The Chamber is the lead advocate for the Greater Binghamton business community. Our objective is to build partnerships with our local delegation and influence public policy in a manner that generates economic growth, innovation and fosters new investment and opportunity for employers in the region.

MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS

Business advocacy in New York State continues to be an uphill battle and that's why it's more important than ever that our membership utilizes the platforms we provide such as lobby days, networking events, and press conferences to make your voices heard.

*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, we advocated in support of infrastructure upgrades, expanded workforce development programs, increased childcare options, energy affordability and reliability and more. We also opposed several dangerous pieces of legislation that if signed into law could raise business costs significantly, increase administrative burdens, and subject employers to unnecessary lawsuits. We were successful in blocking many of these proposals with the support of our statewide partners including Upstate United (UU), the Manufacturers Association of Central NY (MACNY), the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the Business Council of NYS (BCNYS), Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), Associated General Contractors (AGC), and other Chambers of Commerce.

Last year, we held over a dozen business advocacy tours and various programs with elected leaders from local to federal government, giving our members direct access to their representatives, allowing for stronger public-private partnerships.

We've continued to expand our advocacy efforts and provide adequate representation for all our member businesses by continuing to work closely with our Minority, Women, Veteran Business Enterprises (MWVBE) members, Government Affairs Committee, small businesses, and building strong coalitions with other non-profits in our community.

The Chamber is proud of the bipartisan support and relationships we have developed across all levels of government and will continue to prioritize these partnerships to help our businesses grow. With your continued support and collective action, we can push for the reforms necessary to ensure a prosperous Upstate NY for generations to come.

If you're interested in working with one or more of our core advocacy committees, please contact Mina Hoblitz at mhoblitz@greaterbinghamtonchamber.com

* The Chamber's 2025 Legislative Agenda was designed based on input from our annual legislative survey, member feedback, and advocacy committees. The content contained herein includes some of our priorities but does not comprise every piece of legislation we support or oppose.

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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 stakeholders focused on the long-term economic sustainability of the Greater Binghamton Area. 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 local expansion projects. While issues related to housing are not new, we are at a pivotal moment in time when housing across all levels is necessary for the advancement of various industries in our community.

The Chamber Supports:

- Grants to assist with the cost of maintaining and renovating existing and outdated housing stock.
- Shovel-ready housing initiatives to help fund the infrastructure costs (electricity, sewer/water, roads/sidewalks, etc.) associated with building residential properties, which will incentivize more development in our area.
- Additional tax incentives to assist developers with costs needed to build affordable, market-rate, and high end housing.

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 State to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 85% of 1990 levels by 2050. It also requires that 70% of statewide electricity be sourced from renewables by 2030 and that the State be carbon free by 2040.

To achieve the goals of the CLCPA, the State will have to work to build more infrastructure and make significant investments to the grid to make electric buildings and electric 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. While well-intentioned, this program will have profound implications for residents across the state who rely on fuel for transportation and heating their homes and businesses. Under Cap-and-Invest, motorists could pay an extra 12 cents per gallon immediately and up to 22 cents per gallon just a few short years later. The state must find another more reasonable solution to paying for the rollout of the CLCPA.

The Chamber believes that CLCPA implementation should be done with as little cost to the business community as possible. With New York’s huge population loss over the last decade, the legislature must also be aware that continued costs passed on to the ratepayer to fund transmission upgrades will only continue to drive more residents out of New York.

In 2026, this law will penalize businesses with costly assessments (amounting to nearly \$3 billion annually) for producing oil and gas, which remain critical for the safety of all residents and businesses across the state. Due to these costly mandates, fuel companies will be forced to increase the cost of energy which will inevitably fall on the consumer – the very group this legislation intends to protect.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) are currently in the process of designing a program called “Cap-and-Invest” which sets an annual cap on the amount of greenhouse gases that are permitted to be emitted in New York. Both emitters and distributors of heating and transportation fuels will be required to purchase allowances for the emissions associated with their business activities. While well-intentioned, this program will have profound implications for residents across the state who rely on natural gas to heat their homes and businesses.

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

What steps can the state 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 transportation issues.

Our Chamber supports an adequately funded NYSDOT capital program including an additional \$800 million be included in the SFY 2025-26 Executive Budget which will be used to offset inflationary pressures impacting increases to construction and labor costs.

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.

Downtown 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 demolished or repaired to help increase safety and residents' sense of belonging.

IDA Legislation: The Chamber opposes legislative proposals that limit PILOT time frames, increase the scope of prevailing wage on local projects, and efforts to take New York State out of the site selection 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.

Limited access to adequate power continues to be an issue for economic development organizations across Upstate New York. The State should provide a funding mechanism for companies and developers interested in existing sites that have limited energy resources available.

Tourism: The FY 2024 Budget included \$3.45 million for the Tourism Promotion Matching Grant Program – a critical program to help tourism partners across the State strategically market their communities to increase visitors and spending in their local economies. This year, we are asking the Legislature to restore these funds to \$5 million, which will help visitors bureaus build customized marketing plans, increase foot traffic and overnight stays, and increase job creation in the Greater Binghamton Area.

Placemaking: Placemaking is critical to the success and sustainability of communities across New York State. The identification, development and utilization of public spaces and green spaces enhances a sense of community and drives competitiveness. Businesses benefit directly from placemaking as it aids in the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. The Legislature should consider allocating funds to support community-based organizations and municipalities' placemaking activities.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber supports employer led talent pipelines to meet the 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 2025, while promoting career exploration for students at all grade levels.

The Chamber will continue to host programs that provide professional development opportunities for the current workforce. Talent & Leadership programs are necessary as they help to diversify our 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 the justice system and get them into the workforce. Employment for someone with a prior criminal record often 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 the trades.

HEALTH CARE

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

Healthcare remains a top concern for businesses in our area. A constant complaint from membership is the high cost of healthcare coverage in New York State.

The Chamber holds that universal, affordable, and level of quality are all important factors in a healthcare system, however, the most efficient 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 a public-private partnership that currently provides over 95% of New Yorkers with medical coverage. 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 and there are still looming questions about associated cost controls and reimbursement rates for healthcare providers.

If Medicaid reimbursement rates are used under a single payer system, our local hospitals will lose significant revenue. Our area hospitals have already absorbed significant pandemic-

related costs for which government and other payers have inadequately paid. The Chamber supports finding ways that medical technology can be used to expand healthcare access, reduce costs and improve quality. These funding gaps make investing in these innovations, like telehealth development, even more difficult for healthcare facilities.

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 health sciences programs. 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.

Additional mandates on health plans and HCRA taxes on healthcare is a large part of the problem that makes healthcare coverage unaffordable for New Yorkers. Let's look for ways to decrease cost and increase choice.

TAXES & SPENDING

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

Each year, New York State continues to increase taxes to cover larger budgets. In 2024, the state legislature passed a \$237 billion budget, which is \$5 billion more than the year prior.

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

The Chamber Supports:

- Reforms and tax credits to lower taxes for residents and business owners.

- Initiatives to consolidate redundant government services or eliminate ineffective programs.
- Maintaining the 2% property tax cap. With inflation on the rise, property owners and first-time homebuyers cannot afford any further property tax increases.

Tax Parity for Manufacturers: The Chamber supports extending the zero percent manufacturers tax rate to pass-through entities (S-corps, proprietorships, LLCs, and partnerships) to provide tax parity for all manufacturers in New York.

MANDATES & EMPLOYER REGULATIONS

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

Unemployment Insurance: The Chamber will continue to urge our elected officials to use unallocated COVID relief aid or discretionary dollars to pay down the state's \$6.4 billion debt owed to the federal government. With over 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 employers. As a result of the remaining debt, employers have been paying increased FUTA Rates as well as interest assessment surcharges costing them thousands of dollars per year.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): Current EPR proposals would shift recycling costs of end-of-life packaging materials such as glass, metal, paper & plastic products from municipalities onto manufacturers. Under some proposals, manufacturers 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, processing, and education of their recycled materials. For manufacturers working in food service, there have been limited proposed alternatives, suggesting serious threats to food safety. On average this legislation would add an additional \$36 to \$57 per month in grocery costs for the average family of four, or up to \$684 a 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 Act: Various anti-trust proposals would modify the State's current antitrust laws to make New York one of the first 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 without allowing them the opportunity to defend themselves. 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 8th year of Paid Family Leave. The current benefits include 12 weeks of paid leave at 67% of the employee’s average weekly wage. In 2025, the maximum weekly benefit is \$1,757.19 which increased by approximately \$600 from the year prior. In addition to the weekly benefit, the employee contribution rate continues to increase on an annual basis.

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 up to 40 hours of paid sick leave to their employees. This law has presented many challenges for companies in our community who are struggling with this 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.

Good Cause Eviction: On April 20, 2024, New York State’s Good Cause Eviction law took effect. While this law only applies to New York City, it gave Upstate municipalities the ability to opt into the state law via their local legislative bodies (City/Town/Village Councils). 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. The Chamber opposes this legislation as we believe it will push reputable landlords out of the area to other municipalities who have not opt-ed into this legislation and has the potential to disincentivize new investment in our community.

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.

Prevailing Wage Expansion: Unfortunately, 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. This policy has captured a lot of projects and will stagnate economic recovery. The law has just taken effect and it is currently difficult to know the number of projects that are not happening because of this. The Chamber will stand against attempts to alter the prevailing wage law to capture more projects or lower thresholds.

Scaffold Law (Labor Law 240): Scaffold Law requires an absolute liability standard on gravity related construction accidents that happen on the job, regardless of worker negligence. This law dates to the 1800’s, with its original intent to ensure safety of workers and now costing taxpayers approximately \$785 million annually. The Chamber supports repealing the Scaffold Law and replacing it with a comparative negligence standard to spur more development in our area and reduce costs. New York is the last state in the nation to repeal this law, with nearly half the counties across the State having actively submitted resolutions asking for relief. It’s time to modernize this law and fully repeal Labor Law 240.

Worker’s Compensation: Reforms such as reductions in the annual workers’ compensation assessment rate have been implemented, however, workers comp costs remain high in New York putting us at a competitive disadvantage to other states like Texas or Virginia who have much lower rates. It is important that common sense reforms continue to be put in place to further improve the system and reduce rates for employers as New Yorkers currently pay some of the highest rates in the country.

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 to local governments.

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