



# POLICY PRIORITIES

2026

[detroitchamber.com/advocacy](http://detroitchamber.com/advocacy)

Dear Members,

The Detroit Regional Chamber, working in collaboration with partners across the state, is dedicated to advancing an agenda based on common ground and shared economic prosperity. The Chamber believes that by focusing on a unified set of priorities and a strategy that transcends administrations, Michigan can have a more vibrant economy that delivers higher wages, attracts new families and high-growth companies, and improves quality of life in every community.

Unfortunately, the state is facing significant hurdles, including a long-term decline in per capita income, minimal population growth, and a poorly performing K-12 educational system – and there is plenty of blame to go around. The issue is not any particular leader or party, as Michigan has had strong leadership in the Governor's office and legislature over the years. Rather, the absence of a consistent policy strategy is what is at the root of many of these challenges.

Additionally, the Chamber's statewide polling data reveals a stark disconnect between public perceptions and economic realities, and Michigan's economic development strategies have lacked the vision and bipartisan buy-in necessary to sustain them.

The cost of inaction is too high; we must act with urgency, together.

This agenda is a direct response to these challenges, built on a foundation of Michigan's undeniable strengths. Michigan is home to unparalleled natural resources, world-class higher education institutions, and a workforce defined by grit and innovation. Michigan is also the global leader in next-generation mobility, and Detroit's rebirth is a powerful symbol of its capacity for renewal. I invite you to join the Chamber in this critical work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Brian J. Shoaf'.

**Brian J. Shoaf**

Vice President,  
Public Policy and Business Advocacy,  
Detroit Regional Chamber

# BUSINESS CLIMATE

A stable and competitive business environment is foundational to economic growth. Michigan can foster this by simplifying government procedures, ensuring consistent tax and regulation policies, and upgrading both physical and digital infrastructure. These efforts foster confidence in businesses to invest, grow, and hire in Michigan, which in turn supports increases in GDP, payroll, and capital.



## Policy Priorities

- Promote an efficient and effective government that is customer-centric and free from fraud.
- Ensure labor regulations are consistent across city lines, preventing bureaucratic headaches from misaligned policy.
- Support policies that ensure the viability of Michigan's long-term health care and health care insurance delivery to employers and citizens.
- Prioritize tax competitiveness, maintain a multi-year commitment to policy stability, and defend against corporate income tax burdens that make investing in Michigan less attractive than competing states and drive businesses and taxpayers out of Michigan.



Policy consistency is difficult ... [but] if we can get some alignment between the parties and our leaders ... we can move Michigan forward."

**SANDY K. BARUAH**

*President and Chief Executive Officer,  
Detroit Regional Chamber, at the 2025  
Mackinac Policy Conference*

## 2026 Legislative Goals

- Bring Michigan in line with business tax benefits provided by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, such as full R&D and depreciation expensing.
- Remove regulatory barriers to new development projects and ensure permits are promptly approved by creating a "permit shot clock."
- Ensure businesses are protected from frivolous and inflationary lawsuits by further defining an "open and obvious hazard"
- Support initiatives to prepare Michigan's electric grid for future growth from artificial intelligence as well as advance carbon capture and sequestration projects.
- Educate policymakers at the state and federal levels about the disproportionate impact of tariff policies on Michigan.

**High-propensity  
business applications,**  
or those likely to create payroll jobs  
and contribute to job creation, saw a  
**28%**  
increase since 2019.

Source: 2025 State of the Region

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# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Targeted economic development drives statewide goals, starting with Michigan's strengths. The state must support legacy industries and existing companies, providing tools to innovate and lead. By strengthening existing industries and enhancing site readiness for sectors such as aerospace, defense, health care, AI, and emerging fields, Michigan can attract more transformative projects that boost GDP and employment.

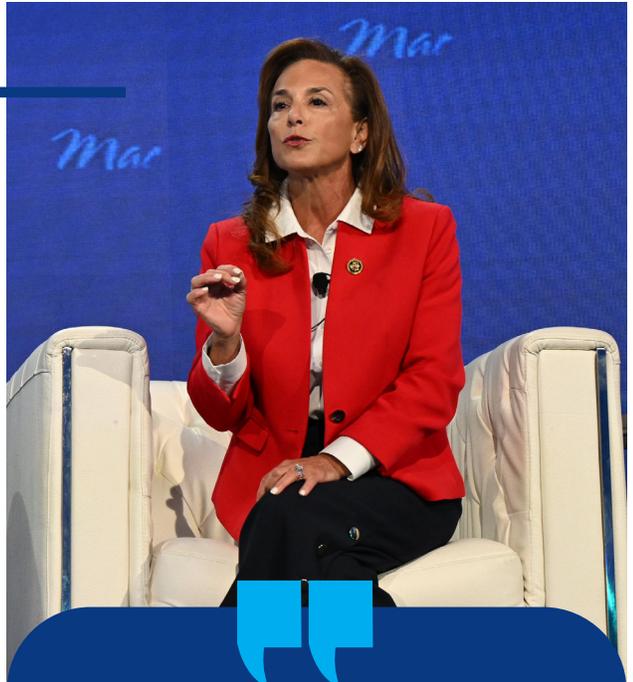


## Policy Priorities

- Reform the statewide economic development approach to ensure consistency over time, adopting best practices.
- Develop a robust and responsible set of competitive incentives to attract and retain high-wage jobs that drive Michigan's economy.
- Support transformational projects and investments that create appealing environments for both talent and employers.
- Advocate for policies that prepare Michigan citizens for the tech-focused 21st-century economy.

## 2026 Legislative Goals

- Protect long-standing economic development commitments, including the Michigan Economic Growth Authority tax credits.
- Re-establish a payroll tax credit for high-dollar job creation and retention.
- Expand transformational brownfield plan incentives, increase funding for the Strategic Site Readiness program, and increase the R&D tax credit.
- Support Michigan's innovation fund, incubators, and the creation of "anchor tenants" or innovation zones to build dense areas of high-tech activity.
- Continue to build out data centers, high-performance computing facilities, and prepare Michigan's workforce to utilize these resources and attract the next generation of technology- and environment-focused industries that need to be co-located with such assets.



It's not just about infrastructure. It's about protecting our supply chains and keeping our economy competitive. Investments in new technology and personnel that keep this [Detroit-Canada] border running efficiently are investments in Michigan's future."

**LISA McCLAIN**

*U.S. Rep. (R-MI 9)  
in *Detroit Magazine**



Source: 2025 MichAuto State of Automobility



# TALENT

A skilled workforce drives prosperity and attracts innovative companies. Investing in Michigan’s education pipeline from K-12 to higher education is vital for supporting high-wage industries that boost GDP and family and community success. A top-tier education system also attracts families and helps reverse population decline. By providing pathways to high-value credentials for all, Michigan can increase per capita income and prosperity and create a more resilient workforce and economy.



## Policy Priorities

- Leverage the Chamber’s effort to achieve a 60% post-high school educational attainment rate for Michigan’s adult population by 2030 as an official State policy.
- Establish greater statewide employer and public policy support for a “K-12 + 2” education ethos that creates the expectation that all Michiganders will pursue at least two years of formal education or value-added training after high school.
- Create financial incentives for employers, stakeholders, and educational institutions to offer wrap-around services to promote college enrollment and completion.
- Continue to work with Launch Michigan and other organizations to support fundamental K-12 education reforms to ensure better outcomes across all Michigan communities.
- Support a comprehensive strategy focused on international talent that recognizes immigrants’ role in addressing educational attainment gaps and helps Michigan create a more competitive workforce.

## 2026 Legislative Goals

- Increase funding and access for Career and Technical Education and STEM programs.
- Expand access to college credits in high school through dual enrollment, early college, and advanced placement (AP) classes.
- Support the Michigan Education Guarantee, a standardization of a meaningful high school diploma for every Michigander, championed by Launch Michigan.
- Focus resources on increasing third-grade reading levels.
- Fully fund the Michigan Achievement Scholarship – a successful key Chamber priority – and continue to support Michigan Reconnect, including lowering the age to qualify for this post-high school degree completion program.
- Increase funding for the Going PRO Talent Fund and create an employer tax credit for upskilling and training workers.
- Supporting legislation that focuses on increasing the number of licensed nurses graduating from Michigan programs.
- Support the expansion of the H1B visa program.



We need to communicate the importance and the correlation between higher education and individual prosperity, and we have to make that direct correlation clear to people so that there is simply no question about it.”

**ORA HIRSH PESCOVITZ**

*President, Oakland University;  
Co-Chair, Detroit Drives Degrees  
Leadership Council,  
Detroit Regional Chamber*



Source: 2025 State of Education and Talent

# MOBILITY

Leveraging Michigan's signature automotive and mobility industry is essential to maintaining its global competitiveness. Continued leadership in future mobility, artificial intelligence, defense, and related industries will accelerate the state's GDP and payroll growth, attracting significant global capital investment. For Michigan to lead globally in mobility, it must also have the infrastructure to support the mobility revolution.



## Policy Priorities

- Support efforts to boost Michigan's high-tech and manufacturing talent strategy, including successful training programs like Going PRO and recruiting the best international talent to support U.S. and Michigan innovation and competitiveness.
- Keep Michigan a key global epicenter of the next-generation automotive and mobility industry by developing smart incentives, tax policies, and regulatory frameworks that support growth and speed of innovation.
- Support investments in Michigan's transportation infrastructure, including intelligent highways, local roads, smart mass transit, ports, railroads, commercial aviation, advanced vehicle technologies, electrification, and non-motorized transportation systems.
- Advocate for the continued importance of mobility trading partners, like Canada, Mexico, and Japan, that depend on a stable global trading system.
- Create practical, long-term incentives that drive new investment and hasten growth among automotive and mobility companies.
- Bolster the future talent pipeline via K-12 STEM and career readiness programming.



We find ourselves in an era defined by rapid automation, the digital economy and AI, rapid shifts in global supply chains, and trade war gamesmanship. Michigan's path forward demands a bold, cohesive agenda that positions [Michigan] to innovate and lead the industry."

**GLENN STEVENS JR.**

*Executive Director, MichAuto;  
Chief Automotive and Innovation Officer,  
Detroit Regional Chamber*

## 2026 Legislative Goals

- Restore FY25 Going PRO funding levels.
- Maintain funding for the Michigan Innovation Fund and support mobility startups.
- Contend for all available state, local, and federal resources, including the reauthorization of federal transportation funding.
- Support the Office of Aerospace and Defense Innovation to integrate these critical sectors with Michigan's mobility ecosystem.
- Promote an updated and robust USMCA that benefits Michigan.

Nearly **65%**  
of every voting demographic agree  
that letting China become the world  
leader in EV manufacturing  
**would hurt Michigan's economy.**

Source: Spring 2025 Detroit Regional Chamber  
Michigan Voter Poll by Glengriff Group



# REGIONAL GROWTH

Robust and equitable growth requires strong regional collaboration, and the Chamber will continue to lead discussions on growing Southeast Michigan. Coordinated strategies on housing, transit, and economic development create vibrant, attractive communities that are essential to population growth. These joint efforts enable smarter, large-scale projects that enhance infrastructure and make the entire Detroit Region more economically competitive.

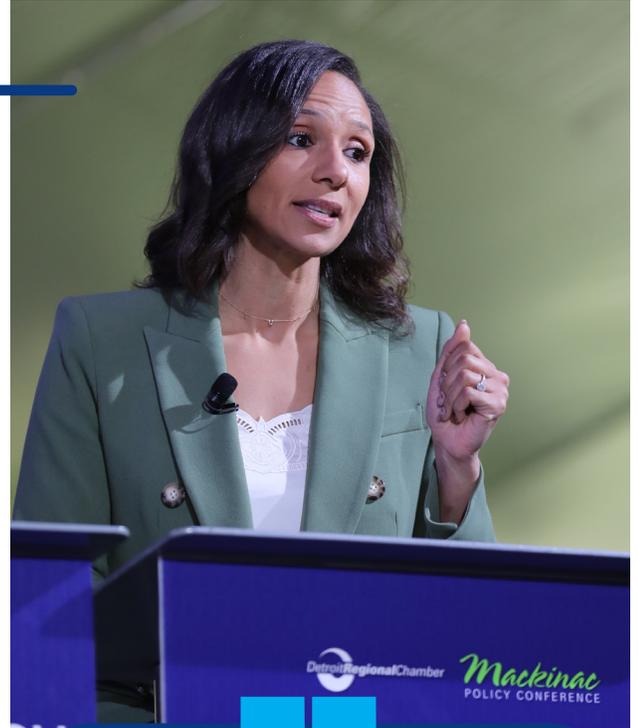


## Policy Priorities

- Advocate for comprehensive and strategic solutions from all levels of government to provide regional transit that seamlessly connects communities across counties.
- Support local ordinances that encourage job growth and educate officials about the harms of over-regulating businesses.
- Continue to work collaboratively with regional county executives, as well as the new Mayor and City Council, in Detroit on shared regional priorities.
- Increase growth opportunities for small businesses, including collaboration with local partnerships.

## 2026 Legislative Goals

- Improve housing regulations to encourage development, including denser multifamily housing options, standardizing inspections across municipalities, and reforming lot sizes.
- Advocate for funding for regional transit, including a Wayne County opt-in ballot initiative.
- Support measures to make visiting the Region easier and more attractive for hosting large events, such as expanding hotel capacity and improving transportation options.
- Codify a definition for microbusinesses to ensure the smallest businesses, with 10 or fewer employees, receive the support and funding they need.



We have a lot to do around the culture of how we do business in Detroit. ... Fostering an ecosystem of support for small business is instrumental and key as we continue to grow Detroit and create a city that's thriving for all.

**MARY SHEFFIELD**

*Mayor, City of Detroit*

The Detroit Region has the **highest homeownership rate** among 19 peer regions, seven percentage points higher than the national average of 65%.

Source: 2025 State of the Region



# DEMOCRACY, EQUITY, AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

According to the Chamber's February 2025 Michigan Voter Poll with the Glengariff Group Inc., nearly two-thirds of voters remain dissatisfied with the condition of democracy in the U.S. The erosion of confidence in democracy continues to threaten the state's and nation's global economic leadership.

Businesses need stability and certainty to thrive and make strategic, long-term investments that bolster economies. State and federal policy fluctuations on two- and four-year cycles are not sustainable and undermine Michigan's ability to innovate. The state's business and government leaders must protect democratic institutions and processes and collaborate on long-term, cohesive strategies to reestablish the trust and stability needed to support economic prosperity.



*Pictured from left to right are Detroit Regional Chamber's Sandy K. Baruah, Former U.S. Rep. (R-MI) Dave Trott, and Senator Ed McBroom (R-MI) at the Chamber's 2024 State of Democracy event.*

## Ways the Chamber Supports Democracy

- Vocalizes support for democratic norms and institutions.
- Encourages bipartisanship and civility among elected officials.
- Leverages the Glengariff Group Inc. and Gallup as polling partners to inform the business community and government officials of Michiganders' views on economic health and the state of democracy.
- Continues its emphasis on policies that increase voter participation and election security. Michigan ranked number three in the nation for voter turnout in 2024, with 74.6% of eligible voters casting a ballot, a level of participation the state should strive to maintain and grow.
- Coordinates with organizations committed to growing the regional economy by supporting businesses and entrepreneurs from all social and economic backgrounds.

Chamber members, as an aside, should be concerned about election integrity and the certification of the presidential election because I think about how your business will be affected in the stock market and consumer confidence in the economy. You want to make sure you're supporting people ... who have a reasonable, pragmatic approach to solving problems and have a track record of proving that it's not all a partisan team in Lansing."

**DAVE TROTT**  
*Former U.S. Representative (R-MI);  
Member, Keep Our Republic  
Advisory Council*

## POTENTIAL 2026 BALLOT PROPOSALS

### That Threaten Michigan's Business and Workers

In 2026, the Chamber will aggressively advocate against and work with our business association peers to thwart several proposed ballot proposals that may harm the state's business climate. The Chamber hopes to protect the business community from misguided changes to the Michigan Constitution that will harm employers and small businesses, while stifling economic growth.

#### Graduated Income Tax

The proposal, strategically named "Invest in MI Kids," to divert attention from the significant small business impacts, creates a second tax bracket for filers who have an income of \$500,000 or \$1 million if filing jointly. Over 90% of filers who would qualify for this bracket are actually small business owners filing their business revenue as a pass-through entity on their personal income taxes, which doesn't take into account actual profits.

#### Minimum Wage Changes

Reverses hard-earned amendments to the Earned Sick Time Act from February 2025, which would allow employees to face no consequences for no-call-no-show absences and implement mandatory sick time that small businesses cannot afford.

#### Lobby Law Overhaul

Disarms any entity from lobbying or otherwise interacting with the legislature if they receive any state money, meaning chambers of commerce, nonprofits, and many employers would not be able to utilize their free speech rights in working with public leaders, making policy decisions that impact their business, community, and employees.

## Get Involved

### DETROIT REGIONAL CHAMBER POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (PAC)

The Chamber PAC comprises business leaders representing bipartisan views and reflecting industry, business size, and location diversity. The Chamber PAC historically makes bipartisan endorsements based on alignment with the Chamber's policy priorities. In the 2024 general election, the Chamber PAC achieved a 97% success rate for its endorsed bipartisan candidates.



CONTRIBUTE  
TO THE PAC

### ADVOCACY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chamber's Advocacy Advisory Council is an exclusive opportunity for Signature Chamber members to receive updates directly from the Public Policy and Business Advocacy team on issues impacting the business community, hear from guest speakers and leaders in the community, and provide valuable feedback on policy and other issues at the local, state, and federal level.