



2019

★ STATE ★

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



birmingham
businessalliance
THE CHAMBER FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY



ECONOMIC GROWTH



“The Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA) promotes policies that will drive inclusive economic growth to promote job growth in the region while supporting a culture of entrepreneurship. Advocating for legislative priorities that place the Birmingham region in a competitive position increases our ability to attract and retain business and a quality workforce. Both the BBA’s State and Federal Agendas consist of policy priorities that are critical to the economic development success of our region. The BBA will advocate for and against policies and legislation that stand to positively or negatively impact the business climate of our region.”

Greg Curran,
Chairman of the Firm
Maynard Cooper & Gale
and BBA Vice Chairman,
Public Policy

“The Birmingham Business Alliance’s (BBA) core principles and mission statement are based on developing sound policies and legislation that not only promote economic development but also spur growth. Our priority of increasing capacity of existing business and recruiting new business in our key industry sectors will lead to job growth and capital investment, which are two of the lead indicators of economic growth. Ultimately when these goals are accomplished, the end product will result in a better quality of life for the citizens of Birmingham’s seven-county region. These policies, designed to boost trade, investment and increased entrepreneurship, are necessary to ensure an inclusive economic development climate where companies thrive.”

Mark Tarr, *President and CEO of Encompass Health and BBA Vice Chairman, Economic Development*

CLASSIFICATION OF FULL-TIME ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS

The BBA supports reauthorizing legislation that exempts site selectors and full-time economic developers from registering as lobbyists in Alabama. HB317, also known as the Alabama Jobs Enhancement Act, was signed into law in 2018 and was crucial to guaranteeing that economic development organizations in Alabama can continue their work to attract new business to the state. The act has a sunset of one year and will expire on April 1, 2019 unless the legislature renews the legislation or passes new legislation during the 2019 Alabama Legislative Session. Jobs, economic prosperity and continued success for the Birmingham region and Alabama are at risk if the legislation is not renewed.

TECHNOLOGY-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The BBA supports the development of a statewide incentive-based program for high-growth startups and tech companies that will accelerate organic growth of these companies in, and recruitment to, the Birmingham region and State of Alabama. This strategy will increase the state’s skilled technology workforce, create an attractive ecosystem that boosts entrepreneurship, attract venture capital and better position Alabama to compete with neighboring states. This approach supports initiatives within our region, such as Innovate Birmingham, that bolster collaboration and success by providing businesses the facilities, infrastructure, access to capital and community support they need to thrive.



ALABAMA JOBS ACT

The BBA supports the continuation and enhancement of the Alabama Jobs Act. The Alabama Jobs Act has put in place incentives that reward the creation of jobs and the investment of capital; has incentivized innovative business clusters; and has encouraged Alabama-based companies to refurbish and upgrade their existing operations. Since its initial passage in 2015, the Alabama Jobs Act has contributed to \$3.2 billion of capital investment and the creation of more than 7,000 jobs in the State of Alabama.

GROW ALABAMA

The BBA supports the continuation and enhancement of the Grow Alabama Tax Credit. The Grow Alabama Tax Credit generates funding to help local economic development organizations develop building sites in order to attract business or industry to an area.

MEDICAID EXPANSION

The BBA supports and encourages state leadership to pursue the estimated \$2 billion annually in federal funds available to create an Alabama-driven approach for Medicaid expansion. Such an effort will return Alabama tax dollars to the state. The BBA supports innovative approaches to reforming Alabama's current Medicaid program that include the participation of the health care community in Alabama to ensure access to care, control costs and limit potential detrimental impacts of Medicaid changes at the federal level.

CONSUMER LENDING PRACTICES

The BBA supports legislation to reform Alabama's laws regulating lending practices that include but are not limited to payday loans and title loans. The BBA supports legislation to curb predatory practices that cause economic hardship for working families in the Birmingham region and State of Alabama as a whole.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

“Innovation and technology thrive in the Birmingham seven-county region – from the \$527 million in research grants and awards for the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and its \$715 billion statewide impact, to the 100 startups located in Innovation Depot and the seven FDA-approved drugs developed at Southern Research. The BBA works closely with hundreds of technology-based companies and local startups to identify resources and potential funding streams needed to grow their business here. To continue Birmingham’s development and growth as a technology hub, policies that encourage increased funding in areas such as research and development must be implemented to expand opportunities for our entrepreneurial and research communities.”

*Devon Laney, President and CEO of Innovation Depot
and BBA Vice Chairman, Research and Innovation*

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TAX CREDITS

The BBA supports a Research and Development income tax credit parallel to the federal R&D credit, with an extra incentive if a qualified research institution performs the research. The BBA supports efforts to pass incentive legislation that encourages research and development activities that result in job growth and improve our ability to attract new industry in R&D.

ALABAMA DRUG DISCOVERY ALLIANCE

The BBA supports a request for matching funds from the state of \$20 million over five years to support the Alabama Drug Discovery Alliance. This partnership, already involving UAB, Southern Research and the Birmingham business community through the BBA, will fund investments in promising new therapeutic targets that are selected through a stringent process designed to optimize the creation of commercially profitable drugs meeting unmet health needs.

INFRASTRUCTURE

“The Birmingham region is home to an international airport, an inland port, three Class I railroads and five interstates. In order to capitalize on these unique assets and our strategic positioning in the Southeast, the BBA and its investors are committed to promoting policies dedicated to increasing revenue and resources for future growth and expansion. Investment in Alabama’s infrastructure is critical to progress for the Birmingham region.”

Nancy Goedecke, CEO and Chairwoman of Mayer
and 2019 Chairwoman of the BBA

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

The BBA supports increasing Alabama’s public investment in transportation infrastructure to sustain and promote economic growth, job creation, quality of life and public safety. The BBA supports transportation funding through investment revenues such as a state gas tax increase or other financially-responsible investments, reforms and long-term solutions.

BROADBAND POLICY INITIATIVE

The BBA supports broadband policies that promote (1) increased access to affordable broadband for all Alabamians, (2) continued investment, technology development and enhanced deployment across Alabama, and (3) competition and choice for Alabama’s businesses and residents. The BBA opposes public policy that leads to burdensome government intervention or government owned competition and government regulation of the Internet, which will inevitably drive up costs for business and consumers in Alabama. Broadband is an important component of Alabama’s infrastructure and the continued growth and diversification of Alabama’s economy.





WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

“Inclusive workforce development is a top priority for the BBA. Through innovative initiatives, the BBA works to recruit the best and brightest talent to the Birmingham metro area and retain the region’s greatest asset - its people. The BBA is committed to continuing to work collaboratively with industry, education and workforce training providers to develop an inclusive career readiness system that ensures all students in our region are prepared for post-secondary options, whether pursuing higher education or entering directly into the workforce. Implementation of these policies will help to address the talent shortage and education misalignment facing our region.”

*Dr. Sanjay Singh, Director, Pack Health
and BBA Vice Chairman, Workforce Development*

STATE WORKFORCE EFFORTS

The BBA continues to support all efforts to better align the state workforce efforts through the seven regional workforce councils and provide sufficient resources to each council for them to fully respond to the workforce needs of industry.

STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM

The BBA supports the implementation of a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to match data about individuals from different sources over time and serve as an important resource for state policymakers, researchers and the public. These systems can be used to provide information about how a state’s education and workforce system are performing and to help students select the best program for them.

EXPANSION OF STATE CAREER COACH PROGRAM

The BBA supports efforts to increase state funding to enable the Department of Education to hire a full capacity of 80 career coaches across the state. This would place one career coach in each public high school in the state at least one day per week. Further, the BBA supports efforts to increase funding to a level that allows for more than one coach to be placed within schools that are in high-need areas.

YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP LEGISLATION

The BBA supports legislation that expands hands-on apprenticeship opportunities for students, immersing them in their potential career environment while protecting participating industry from potential litigation. Current state apprenticeship programs for students under the age of 18 are constrained by state workers’ compensation and insurance regulations that limit access to on-site industrial training.



The Birmingham Business Alliance would like to thank the members of its Public Policy Committee, the Governmental Affairs Committee and the many community and elected officials who contributed their time and effort in formulating the 2019 State Agenda.

BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS ALLIANCE 2018-2019 PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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