



2020

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



birmingham
businessalliance

THE CHAMBER FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY



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

“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.”



ECONOMIC GROWTH

“The Birmingham Business Alliance’s (BBA) core principles and mission statement are based on developing sound policies that spur economic growth. These policies are essential to ensure an inclusive economic development climate where companies succeed. Our priority of increasing the capacity of existing business and recruiting new business in key industry sectors will lead to quality job growth and economic resilience.”

Joe Hampton, *President of Spire and
BBA Vice Chairman, Economic Development*

ALABAMA JOBS ACT

The BBA supports the continuation and enhancement of the Alabama Jobs Act; the current legislation is set to sunset unless reauthorized prior to its expiration on December 31, 2020. The Alabama Jobs Act has put in place incentives that reward the creation of jobs and the investment of capital, incentivized innovative business clusters, and encouraged Alabama-based companies to refurbish and upgrade their existing operations.

GROWING ALABAMA

The BBA supports the continuation and enhancement of the Growing Alabama Tax Credit; the current legislation is set to sunset unless reauthorized prior to its expiration on September 30, 2020. The Growing Alabama Tax Credit generates funding to help local economic development organizations develop building sites in order to attract business or industry to an area. Growing Alabama credits can also be awarded for funding of tech company accelerators, research parks, industrial parks, inland ports and intermodal facilities, and to create workforce marketing campaigns to attract STEM workers.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS

The BBA supports and encourages state leadership to make permanent the tax credits for the rehabilitation, preservation and redevelopment of residential or commercial historic structures to stimulate private investment, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, and job creation.

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.

TECHNOLOGY-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As evidenced by the successful passage of the Alabama Incentives Modernization Act in 2019, the BBA will continue to support legislation that enhances technology-based economic development in order to 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.

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.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The BBA supports efforts by the State of Alabama to take full advantage of the 34 designated qualified opportunity zones in our seven-county region. This vital economic development program serves as a portal to attract both national and international dollars to local projects and underserved communities. Opportunity zones are one of the keys in building a network of developers, entrepreneurs, banks and other institutions to find the best investments across our region.

2020 U.S. CENSUS

Full participation in the 2020 Census is critical for Alabama's future. The BBA fully supports Governor Kay Ivey's Alabama Counts! 2020 Census outreach, awareness and motivation efforts. At stake in the 2020 Census is billions in federal funding for critical programs that help our communities, schools, health care and infrastructure. Census participation is critical for Alabama to retain current representation in Congress. The census also plays a big role in economic and retail development because companies use the data to make decisions on where to locate or expand.





RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

"Research and technology thrive in the Birmingham seven-county. To continue Birmingham's development and growth as a technology hub, policies that encourage inclusive innovation must be implemented to grow entrepreneurship. The BBA works closely with hundreds of technology-based companies and local startups to identify resources and potential funding streams needed for sustainable growth."

Dr. Ray L. Watts, *President of University of Alabama at Birmingham and
BBA Vice Chairman, Research and Innovation*

GENOMIC MEDICINE BUILDING

The BBA supports the continued development of the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Interdisciplinary Biomedical Research Corner through a substantive investment in the Genomic Medicine and Data Sciences Building. This complex, once completed, will provide new research space for interdisciplinary biomedical research, including investigators from multiple schools working on common themes. The complex would house researchers studying medical informatics, personalized medicine, cybersecurity and the analysis of "big data." This is an important opportunity for the state to invest in new jobs and economic development in the Birmingham area.

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.

"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, especially in projects like the Northern Beltline, is critical to progress for the Birmingham region."

*M. James Gorrie, CEO and President of
Brasfield and Gorrie and 2020 Chairman 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.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

The BBA applauds the passage of the Rebuild Alabama Act in 2019 to improve the state's infrastructure. The BBA continues its support in increasing Alabama's public investment in transportation infrastructure to sustain and promote economic growth, job creation, quality of life and public safety.

NORTHERN BELTLINE

The BBA supports the construction, full funding and timely completion of the Northern Beltline as an essential component of the Appalachian Development Highway System in order to support economic development and additional job creation in the region and the state. The BBA opposes any actions that would redirect the readily available federal funds for the Northern Beltline, which can be used without any state matching funds, to other state transportation projects that require the use of state matching funds to access federal funds.

BIRMINGHAM-JEFFERSON COUNTY PORT AUTHORITY

The BBA supports expanding the port and encourages the efforts of the Birmingham-Jefferson County Port Authority to obtain funding on the private, local, state and federal levels in order to improve safety, encourage economic development and bring jobs to Birmingham and surrounding areas. This includes but is not limited to grants and other funding streams.

BROADBAND POLICY INITIATIVE

The Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA) supports broadband policies that promote: (1) increased access to affordable broadband for all Alabamians, (2) the efficient deployment of advanced technology platforms, (3) continued investment and innovation to enhance deployment across Alabama, and (4) competition and choice for Alabama's businesses and residents. The BBA opposes public policy that promotes or leads to burdensome bureaucratic processes, government regulation of the Internet, and government-owned competition, all of which inevitably drives 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. To accomplish these broadband goals, the Birmingham Business Alliance specifically supports:

- Streamlining and standardizing the permitting process for small cell wireless equipment and services;
- Allowing wireless companies limited access to public Rights of Way for the deployment of small cells; and
- Establishing permit-fee limitations for localities, allowing them to recover reasonable costs while still encouraging broadband investment.



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*

TALENT RETAINMENT

The BBA supports initiatives that enhance the state's ability to retain talent. In today's increasingly complex economy, a competitive workforce is crucial to ensure continued economic growth. The Birmingham region's people are its greatest asset, and programs dedicated to addressing the talent shortage are essential.

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.

CHILD CARE TAX CREDITS

The BBA supports child care tax credits for families, providers and educators not only to support workforce needs in an impactful way but also to help bridge the gap between quality and accessibility for working parents. Child care is a significant challenge for many Alabama families. Coupled with the need for 500,000 skilled workers in the next five years, it is possible to have substantial disruptions in workforce and long-term economic loss to the state's economy if child care needs are not addressed.



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