



# 2021

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# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



birmingham  
businessalliance  
THE CHAMBER FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY



**Greg Curran,**

*Chairman of the Firm Maynard Cooper & Gale  
BBA Vice Chair of Public Policy  
BBA Chair of the Board-Elect  
Chair-elect of the Board of Directors*

“*The Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA) supports policies that drive innovation, encourage entrepreneurship, and promote regional job growth. As the Birmingham region rebounds from the impact of COVID-19, the BBA's role in building a competitive workforce and creating a fertile environment for new economic development opportunities is critically important to the future of the region. The BBA is committed to being an advocate for pro-business initiatives at all levels of government, and our State and Federal Agendas consist of legislative priorities that reinforce a strong business climate.*”



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# ECONOMIC GROWTH

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## **ALABAMA JOBS ACT**

The BBA supports the continuation and enhancement of the Alabama Jobs Act. The Governor of Alabama signed a supplemental emergency proclamation to extend the tax credit program until the Legislature has an opportunity to enact legislation addressing the program during the 2021 Regular Session. 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 CREDIT**

The BBA supports the continuation and enhancement of the Growing Alabama Credit. The Governor of Alabama signed a supplemental emergency proclamation to extend the tax credit program until the Legislature has an opportunity to enact legislation addressing the program during the 2021 Regular Session. The Growing Alabama 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 extend 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. The program will provide \$20 million in tax credits each calendar year from 2018-2022, spurring private capital investment across the state. As this incentive is set to expire in 2022, passing legislation to extend the tax credit program will inspire additional redevelopment projects in Alabama's downtowns and historic neighborhoods.

## **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.

### **CIVIL IMMUNITY**

The BBA supports legislation to provide civil immunity protections for entities that continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Comprehensive legislation is needed to protect businesses, health care providers, educational entities, churches, governmental organizations and other institutions deemed “essential” from certain claims and damages arising from individuals who allege that they contracted or were exposed to COVID-19. These entities, especially those in the small business community, cannot afford the risk of additional financial injury due to costly lawsuits resulting from circumstances beyond their control.



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# RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

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## **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.

## **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TAX CREDITS**

In addition to the Research and Development grant program that passed in 2019, the BBA supports a Research and Development income financial institution excise tax credit parallel to the federal R&D credit. 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.



## **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 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 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.



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# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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## **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 appropriations and 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 and COVID-19 has only exacerbated the issue. 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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