

2025 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA



BEAUFORT, SC

REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THE CHAMBER ADVOCATES FOR BEAUFORT COUNTY BUSINESSES AT
[BEAUFORTCHAMBER.ORG/ADVOCACY](https://beaufortchamber.org/advocacy)

P.O. Box 910, Beaufort, SC 29901 | 843-525-8525 | Hello@BeaufortChamber.org

OUR PRIORITY IS BUSINESS.

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce exists to promote economic prosperity to enhance the well-being of everyone in our region. Advocating on behalf of the Beaufort Region's employers with state, local and federal governments is essential to our mission.

The Chamber encourages elected officials to pursue these public policy priorities and will report to its members on outcomes that align with this agenda.

Opportunities to align legislation with the needs of our community are compiled each year and are based on the Chamber's Guiding Principles, which inform the Chamber's advocacy efforts and preferred approach to policymaking. The Public Policy Agenda is approved by the Chamber Board of Directors and disseminated broadly.



FEDERAL | TOP PRIORITY: SUPPORT HEALTHCARE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND RESILIENCY INVESTMENTS ON MILITARY BASES.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Renew tax cuts that are set to expire in 2025, and oppose anti-growth tax proposals that disproportionately increase the tax burden on businesses and small business owners.
- Strengthen trade deals to increase global opportunities for American businesses.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Establish or renew pro-growth tax policies that benefit Americans by encouraging businesses to invest in their companies, workers, and communities, leading to higher wages and standard of living.
- Support programs that progress talent acquisitions and workforce development.

HOSPITALITY

- Advance regulations in the seafood industry, specifically concerning the influx of imported products like foreign shrimp.

HOUSING

- Make necessary adjustments to the federal housing authority voucher system to cover the shortfall of rent prices, add project-based vouchers, and create more qualified housing through the re-positioning process.
- Support the proposed expansion of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit including the modification of the 4% Bond credit program.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Maintain the current federal project waterway designation and physical navigation markers for the Port Royal Harbor Channel.
- Ensure the long-term solvency of the Federal Highway Trust Fund through sustained funding.

MILITARY MISSION SUPPORT

- Fully fund the planned, new ambulatory care clinic at MCAS Beaufort for active-duty military families, and cover the cost overage to construct the new VA Medical Clinic to serve Beaufort area veterans.
- Work with regional and state officials to determine long-term strategy for Naval Hospital Beaufort and future site usage to benefit the military and local community through re-development.
- Appropriate funds to build resiliency in infrastructure and facilities as necessary to secure the second century of making Marines at MCRD Parris Island.
- Regulate foreign-owned land within a 50-mile radius of military bases, and safeguard military missions at MCAS Beaufort by adopting legislation to ensure that wind energy facilities comply with federal guidelines and do not impact military operations.

STATE | TOP PRIORITY: ENSURE SOUTH CAROLINA REMAINS A TOP DESTINATION FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING

- Increase the state's Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and support administrative changes necessary for Beaufort-area projects to compete successfully for credits.
- Update regulations to allow Employer housing supplements to be tax-exempt.
- Expand the SC Housing Trust Fund for Home Repairs by reducing the administrative burden for sponsor applications and project approvals once in the program.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Pass Fair Share Liability Reform (joint and several) to more reasonably reflect fault in tort actions to improve the state's insurance coverage requirements in support of several industries.
- Adjust Unemployment Benefit length and amount to reflect market conditions in support of strengthening the labor market.
- Explore incentives targeted to support recruitment and retention of high-impact corporate and technology jobs.
- Lower the individual income tax rate to bring South Carolina more in line with our Southeastern neighbors and create exemptions for small business property taxes.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Seek solutions to expand the accessibility and affordability of childcare to support the development of children ages 0-4 and ensure parents may fully participate in the workforce.
- Continue to support the South Coast Cyber Center's initiative to address maritime cyber security challenges and to build a cyber talent pipeline with NSA/DHS Centers of Academic Excellence.
- Fund priority capital investments at USCB to enhance instructional capacity, and support equitable, sustained funding for Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL) workforce development initiatives.

HEALTHCARE

- Renew funding to support the recruitment and retention of nursing faculty at colleges and universities across the state.
- Expand the scope of practice terms, broaden healthcare certifications, and simplify interstate medical licensure requirements to increase access to care.
- Continue supporting initiatives that improve access, services, and transportation related to mental health patients.

HOSPITALITY

- Support hospitality sector businesses by maintaining consistent investment in high-impact tourism marketing efforts by directing resources to local and regional destination marketing agencies.

INFRASTRUCTURE & RESILIENCY

- Support capacity-building and resiliency improvements of water/sewer infrastructure and natural gas/electric grid capacities to meet growth demands.
- Fund ongoing road and bridge maintenance and improvements to enhance safety and mobility, and provide State Infrastructure Bank funding for the Hilton Head Island Bridge repairs, if not replacement.
- Support the Carolina Bay Estuary as it seeks to become part of the National Estuary Program and its efforts to conduct research on local ecology, erosion issues, and natural barrier islands.

MILITARY MISSION SUPPORT

- Advocate for federal appropriations to benefit resiliency and infrastructure investments on military bases in Beaufort County.
- Increase opportunities for small businesses to hire veterans through the STAYS program.
- Restructure the South Carolina Military Base Task Force to include MEC Chair as Beaufort County's at-large representative to continue regional support of bases with state and federal officials.



LOCAL | TOP PRIORITY: ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY TO ENSURE PRODUCTIVE COMMUNITY INPUT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING

- Support public-private-philanthropic partnerships to create more workforce and affordable housing, and continue funding the Beaufort-Jasper Housing Trust, Inc.
- Advocate for policies that promote a diversity of housing by removing moratoriums, creating exceptions for affordable/workforce housing, and finalizing changes with the local zoning and building codes to reduce restrictions.
- Reduce or exempt land entitlement and fee structures from affordable or workforce housing
- Establish a perpetual fund for home repair programs within local municipalities to benefit qualifying citizens.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Challenge restrictive tax policies, fee increases, and regulations that further burden small businesses and hinder growth potential.
- Streamline development and permitting processes to increase predictability and reduce time and costs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Deploy all available resources to support the attraction, retention and expansion of industries that create high quality jobs and support economic diversification.
- Continue current investments to expand and recruit new industries and businesses to the Beaufort Commerce Park.
- Support efforts for increased site development opportunities and infrastructure in northern Beaufort County, bringing economic opportunities to underserved communities in the region.

EDUCATION

- Advocate for appropriations and programmatic improvements that enhance the quality of education from birth to Kindergarten and K-12 to support local educational initiatives in preparation for post-secondary school, military or workforce opportunities.
- Support the advancement of Technical College of the Lowcountry offerings and initiatives to prepare students for the workforce and ensure alignment with industry needs.
- Support the advancement of University of South Carolina Beaufort offerings and initiatives to build 4-year degree programming in key sectors, such as marine biology, and housing for a growing student population, specifically around the Beaufort campus.

HEALTHCARE

- Continue supporting public, private and philanthropic partnerships that improve access to care and strengthen the healthcare workforce.

HOSPITALITY SECTOR

- Support hospitality businesses by maintaining investment in high-impact tourism marketing and diversifying visitor segments.
- Manage short-term rental housing levels and capture fair share of local accommodations tax to align with other lodging regulations.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Restructure and prioritize transportation capacity and safety projects from the voter-approved 2018 referendum.
- Maintain and improve stormwater infrastructure to protect people, homes and businesses from flood impacts.
- Repair and maintain the City of Beaufort's Waterfront Park, county boat landings, and other public parks and assets.
- Improve local marinas in Beaufort and Port Royal through re-development efforts to expand access for visitors and residents.

LAND USE PLANNING

- Carefully balance land use decisions with responsibilities to protect historic, ecological and economic assets.
- Support property-owner rights in context with comprehensive land use plans.

MILITARY RETENTION & EXPANSION

- Ensure that policies and practices are well-coordinated with the region's military installations and support retention and expansion of military missions.
- Continue funding of MEC support activities, specifically steps toward MCRDPI and MCAS resiliency and healthcare offerings, and the future re-development of the Naval Hospital site.
- Increase usage of Intergovernmental Service Agreements to relieve military bases of non-mission services that may be provided by local businesses or governments

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Support the advancement of workforce development efforts to benefit the region's businesses and employees, including policies, programs, and facilities that connect education to business and create a positive local environment for recruiting, upskilling and retaining qualified workers by leveraging local, state, and federal funds.
- Support stronger linkage between schools and businesses to increase programming that exposes students to trade and service industries and career paths.

