

2026 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

BEAUFORT REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OUR PRIORITY IS BUSINESS.

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce is organized to advance the business community and promote the overall welfare and prosperity of our region. The Chamber is charged with employing appropriate means of promotion to achieve these goals, with particular emphasis on supporting and enhancing the region's economic, civic, commercial, military, tourism, educational, cultural and industrial interests.

The Chamber encourages elected officials to pursue public policy priorities supporting the goals of advancement of the business community and welfare and prosperity of the region. The priorities outlined in this agenda are ones believed by the Chamber to align with and help achieve these goals. The Chamber updates priorities annually and reports to its members on related outcomes.

Public Policy Guiding Principles presented in this document are evergreen principles that inform the Chamber's efforts to educate and communicate with their members and policy makers concerning the Chamber's goals above and related public policy priorities aligned with supporting these goals. The Public Policy Agenda is approved by the Board of Directors.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THE CHAMBER ADVOCATES FOR BEAUFORT COUNTY BUSINESSES AT WWW.BEAUFORTCHAMBER.ORG

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ECONOMIC GROWTH & BUSINESS CLIMATE

Foster a pro-business environment through clear, consistent regulation and competitive tax policy that supports the success of all employers.

ATTAINABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING

Advocate for market-driven housing solutions that ensure local workers and families can live where they work and businesses can recruit and retain employees.

INFRASTRUCTURE & RESILIENCE

Support strategic investments in transportation, utilities, broadband, and storm/flood infrastructure that enable sustainable growth and regional connectivity.

MILITARY SUPPORT & RETENTION

Promote policies that protect, enhance and expand military missions and quality of life in the region as essential contributors to the local economy and national security.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

Encourage access to quality, affordable healthcare to support a healthy, productive workforce and thriving community.

HOSPITALITY, TOURISM & CULTURAL ASSETS

Sustain investment in the visitor economy and preservation of local heritage as critical economic drivers.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Champion a cradle-to-career talent pipeline through strong early education, skilled trades training, and higher education alignment with employer needs.

BALANCED STEWARDSHIP

Balance environmental protection and economic development to preserve our region's natural assets, quality of life, and economic prosperity.

STATE PRIORITIES

TOP PRIORITY:

- **Ensure South Carolina remains a top destination for recruiting, training, and retaining employers and employees and their families, both in the civilian and military sectors.**

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce encourages members of the South Carolina General Assembly to act on the following priorities during the 2026 session:

MILITARY SUPPORT & RETENTION

- **Advocate for mission expansion at the three installations in Beaufort County, specifically, advocate for highest and best use of the Naval Support Facility (NSF), Naval Hospital, Beaufort.**
- 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 and programs and that ease hiring of military spouses.
- Continue to advocate for favorable tax treatment for active and retired military and their families to incentivize residency.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

- **Renew funding to support the recruitment and retention of nursing and other healthcare 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 patients generally, including mental health patients.

HOSPITALITY TOURISM, & CULTURAL ASSETS

- **Maintain a consistent allocation of tourism marketing resources to local and regional destination marketing organizations (DMOs) that drive visitation, strengthen local economies, and support small business vitality.**
- Promote policies that protect local fishermen and watermen, including enforcement of labeling standards, grants for seafood infrastructure, and investments that maintain South Carolina's wild-caught seafood heritage.
- Advocate for statewide tax measures and allocations that support and bolster hospitality sectors.

STATE PRIORITIES

ECONOMIC GROWTH & BUSINESS CLIMATE

- **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.**
- Pass meaningful tort reform package that we believe will fix our broken civil “justice” system, make South Carolina’s economy more competitive, and enforce fair-share liability.
- Explore incentives targeted to support recruitment and retention of high-impact corporate and technology jobs.
- Adjust Unemployment Benefit length and amount to reflect market conditions in support of strengthening the labor market.
- Expand designations of Opportunity Zones for increased investment in low-income areas.

INFRASTRUCTURE & RESILIENCY

- **Strengthen South Carolina’s infrastructure and energy production capabilities, including options for nuclear and other energy sources for positioning South Carolina as a hub for high tech manufacturing.**
- Support capacity-building and resiliency improvements of water/sewer infrastructure and natural gas/electric grid and related capacities to meet growth demands.
- Fund ongoing road and bridge maintenance and improvements to enhance safety and mobility.
- Ensure utility relocation costs on State road projects are appropriately funded through DOT rather than local rate payers and constituents.
- Explore funding opportunities for infrastructure to protect people, homes and businesses from stormwater and tidal flood impacts, and Emergency Preparedness/ Recovery plans to protect and restore communities affected by natural disasters.
- Adjust electric vehicle registration fees to ensure EV owners contribute equitably to fund ongoing roadway improvements.



ATTAINABLE & 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.
- Fund priorities with the SC Housing Authority to align with market conditions including increasing AMI levels and other relevant changes to support housing access goals.
- Support targeted housing incentives for essential workers such as nurses, teachers, first responders, military and hospitality workforce.

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.**
- Support equitable, sustained funding for Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL) workforce development initiatives.
- Fund priority capital investments at USCB to enhance instructional capacity, especially with marine and environmental sciences, and the infrastructure needs to support Division II Athletics and adequate supply of student housing.
- Expand funding for workforce development programs, including CDL training, construction, culinary training, hospitality and tourism management, nursing, and other high demand training and certification programs through technical colleges and universities.
- Continue to support the South Coast Cyber Center’s initiative to supply and build a cyber talent pipeline with NSA/DHS Centers of Academic Excellence at USCB and TCL and to address maritime cyber security challenges.

LOCAL/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

TOP PRIORITY

- Simplify regulatory processes and prioritize policies that help businesses grow, workers thrive and keep business and workforce needs at the center of local policy decisions.**

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce encourages municipal government councils to act on the following priorities.

ATTAINABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING

- Support public-private-philanthropic partnerships and other structures to create more workforce and attainable housing, and continue funding the Beaufort-Jasper Housing Trust, Inc.**
- Advocate for policies that promote a diversity of housing by improving the local zoning and building codes to reduce restrictions and unpredictable process for attainable/workforce housing.
- Reduce or exempt land entitlement and fee structures from attainable or workforce housing.

INFRASTRUCTURE & RESILIENCE

- Prioritize the repair of the City of Beaufort's Waterfront Park.**
- Complete county-wide transportation infrastructure projects as amended.
- Prioritize timely planning, communication, and execution of major infrastructure projects such as drainage, waterfront improvements, parking, and wayfinding to reduce economic disruption for small businesses.
- Support improvement of local marinas in Beaufort and Port Royal through re-development efforts, and repair/maintain county boat landings as important community assets.
- Support septic to sewer transition projects aimed at improving public health and protection of the watershed.
- Support long-term resiliency planning and improve stormwater infrastructure to protect people, homes and businesses.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

- Continue supporting public, private and philanthropic partnerships that improve care options and access to care.**
- Advance programs and efforts to strengthen the healthcare workforce, and support recruiting of providers.

ECONOMIC GROWTH & BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Streamline development and permitting processes to increase predictability and reduce time and costs.**
- Deploy all available resources to support the attraction, retention and expansion of industries that create high quality jobs and support economic diversification.
- Continue support and funding of Beaufort County's Economic Development Corporation and its mission.
- Expand site-ready development and infrastructure within Beaufort County and recruit new industries and businesses to the Beaufort Commerce Park.
- Challenge restrictive tax policies, fee increases, and regulations that further burden businesses and hinder growth potential.

LAND USE PLANNING

- Approve strategic upzoning to support targeted economic growth areas and attainable housing development.**
- Support property-owner rights along with approved comprehensive land use plans.
- Carefully balance land use decisions to weigh relevant factors such as a project's overall effect on historic, ecological and/or economic assets.

MILITARY MISSION SUPPORT

- Support retention and expansion of military missions, ensuring coordination with the region's military installations.**
- Support local military community and families with provision of strong educational, housing and workforce, and protect resources near our installations as needed for installation missions' quality of life.
- 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 essential services that may be provided by local businesses or governments.
- Prioritize protecting and enhancing infrastructure and resilience on and off bases in support of the installations.

LOCAL/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Focus on cradle-to-career initiatives with appropriations and programs that enhance the quality of education from birth to Kindergarten and K-12 to prepare students for post-secondary school, military or workforce opportunities.**
- Explore childcare options including public-private partnerships to activate municipal facilities and other options, helping working families access quality care.
- 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 cybersecurity, and increase housing for a growing student population.
- Support stronger linkage between schools and businesses to increase programming that exposes students to trade and service industries and career paths.

HOSPITALITY, TOURISM, & CULTURAL ASSETS

- **Support policies that promote safe and vibrant downtown areas, including social districts, and annual investment in high-return tourism marketing programs, downtown activation, and diversified visitor initiatives that strengthen year-round economic stability.**
- Advance the work of the Sports Council to improve sports and recreation facilities and youth programming that enhance quality of life and contribute to the region's appeal for families and employers.
- Diversify visitor segments by prioritizing strategies that attract both daytrip and overnight visitation, including festivals, cultural programming, and waterfront experiences.
- Encourage streamlined permitting and predictable regulatory processes for events, signage, outdoor dining, and hospitality growth.
- Advocate for local sourcing initiatives and partnerships that highlight local seafood, supporting both restaurants and the region's cultural identity.



FEDERAL PRIORITIES

TOP PRIORITY

- Enhance investments on military bases to support infrastructure, resiliency, healthcare and quality of life for service members.**

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce encourages members of the U.S. Congress to act on the following priorities during the 2026 session:

MILITARY SUPPORT & RETENTION

- Work with state and local officials for mission expansion at the three installations in Beaufort County, especially highest and best use of Naval Support Facility (NSF), Naval Hospital Beaufort.**
- Prioritize the expeditious completion of the new VA Medical Clinic to serve Beaufort area veterans who now must travel to Savannah or Charleston to obtain care.
- Fully fund the planned new ambulatory care clinic at MCAS Beaufort for active-duty military families and any planned new clinic for medical care at MCRDPI.
- Appropriate funds for improvements and resiliency in infrastructure and facilities as necessary for all missions including the second century of making Marines at MCRD Parris Island and MCAS Beaufort's missions.
- Fund and advocate for quality-of-life measures for military and families at the installations including barracks and other housing on and off-base, as well as childcare, education, and spousal employment support.

ECONOMIC GROWTH & BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Continue pro-growth tax policies that benefit Americans by encouraging businesses to invest in their companies, workers, and communities, leading to higher wages and a better standard of living.**
- Support continuation and expansion of Opportunity Zones to support investments in businesses and jobs in low-income areas.
- Encourage federal programs that expand attainable workforce housing and childcare solutions, directly supporting hospitality and other employees and strengthening employer retention.
- Strengthen trade deals to increase global opportunities for American businesses.

INFRASTRUCTURE & RESILIENCY

- Maintain the Port Royal Harbor Channel's current federal project waterway designation, physical navigation markers, and channel depth.**
- Ensure the long-term solvency of federal infrastructure including the Federal Highway Trust Fund through sustained funding and efficient permitting processes for modernization of infrastructure measures.
- Support interstate collaboration with Georgia to ensure water source protection for Savannah River.

HOSPITALITY TOURISM, & CULTURAL ASSETS

- Support federal trade policy that stabilizes supply chains and reduces inflationary pressure on food costs, including removal or reduction of tariffs on key imported food items.**
- Advance and enforce stronger regulations in the seafood industry, specifically addressing the influx of imported shrimp and mislabeled seafood products through country-of-origin labeling (COOL), DNA verification, and penalties for seafood fraud to protect both consumers and American watermen.

ATTAINABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING

- Support favorable provisions to bolster the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program as needed to support housing goals, including with respect to the 4% tax credit bond program.**
- 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.

