

# Waterbury Regional Chamber 2025 Legislative Agenda



## Focus On Economic & Business Development Must Continue

On January 8, 2025, the Connecticut legislature will reconvene, and Governor Ned Lamont will continue his second term. The Waterbury Regional Chamber, its affiliates, the Naugatuck Chamber, the Watertown Oakville Chamber, the Southbury Chamber, and our members expect that our elected officials will continue to focus on economic growth, business attraction and retention, and workforce challenges. We urge members of the State House and Senate to thoughtfully fulfill their roles in determining policy and regulatory changes. We implore the legislature and Governor Lamont to understand the tremendous impact the business climate and the ensuing inflationary period has had on businesses in the state. It is vital to the state's economy to enact policies that not only help businesses survive but thrive in this turbulent economy.



*Chairman of Public Policy*  
**Jack E. Traver Jr.**  
President  
Traver IDC

Below is the Chamber's legislative agenda outlining the key priorities and objectives for the State in 2025. Additionally, there is a comprehensive overview of the specific legislative changes, innovative concepts, and programs that our chamber advocates for, encompassing both regional and local levels.

<p><b>TAXES &amp; SPENDING</b></p> <p>Restore the pass-through entity tax credit to its original level, reducing costs for over 120,000 small businesses within the State that employ more than 730,000 people.</p> <p>Encourage research and development growth by increasing the tax credit value rate to 100%.</p>	<p><b>LABOR &amp; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>Advocate for the Department of Consumer Protections to reform the apprenticeship hiring ratio issue in committee.</p> <p>Reduce and cap occupational license fees.</p>	<p><b>EDUCATION &amp; CHILDCARE</b></p> <p>Provide tax incentives or subsidies for businesses that contribute to employees' childcare expenses.</p> <p>Support equitable funding for public institutions of higher education, while working to reduce costs and improve efficiencies; create a balanced approach for public, private, for-profit and nonprofit post-secondary schools.</p>
<p><b>MANUFACTURING</b></p> <p>Prioritize funding for STEM/trade education and training; adequately fund programs that support manufacturing jobs &amp; incumbent-worker training.</p>	<p><b>HEALTH CARE &amp; PUBLIC SAFETY</b></p> <p>Support policies that ensure the healthcare infrastructure in Greater Waterbury continues to serve the entire community; prioritize educational and workforce initiatives to support healthcare jobs and training, as well as policies that support fair payment and access to care. Amplify the voices of local business and community leaders in justice reform and public safety.</p>	<p><b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &amp; TOURISM</b></p> <p>Increase development partnerships with locally owned small businesses.</p> <p>Move away from single year campaigns; sustain annual funding to support Connecticut tourism appropriate to other New England States.</p>
<p><b>ENERGY &amp; ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>Support the funding and creation of an energy affordability commission charged with identifying long-term policies to lower costs and improve our energy infrastructure.</p> <p>Adequately fund programs that help reduce energy usage and cost; modernize regulations for the remediation and redevelopment of Brownfields.</p>	<p><b>REGULATORY REFORM</b></p> <p>Streamline state and local permitting by automating processes, enforcing permit review timelines, and providing online status tracking.</p> <p>Reduce or eliminate unnecessary or outdated regulations to promote business development and job creation.</p>	<p><b>TRANSPORTATION &amp; INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p> <p>Prioritize and fund infrastructure maintenance and repair projects; complete improvements to the Waterbury rail line; support policies that promote transit-oriented development.</p>

## **TAXES & SPENDING**

- Leverage councils of governments to share services and take advantage of federal grant opportunities to reduce property taxes
- Eliminate the temporary corporate tax surcharge
- Expand the use of nonprofit organizations to deliver state services
- Continue to pay down the debt of the unemployment compensation fund
- Responsible management of the record budget surplus
- Oppose new business taxes and tax increases
- Create incentives to attract and retain college students upon graduation
- Eliminate overtime and mileage in pension calculations
- Support tax policies that encourage investment in job creation and apprenticeships
- Create tax incentives for STEM students at Connecticut colleges and universities to accept employment in Connecticut upon graduation
- Support replacing collective bargaining for state employee contracts with administrative branch negotiation & retain required approval votes by both legislative chambers

## LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Seek reforms for paid sick leave
- Support the increase in collaboration between education and business member stakeholders
- Recognize the impact of Regional Industry Sector Partnerships
- Update the state report card to include experiential learning
- Tailor workforce development programs to prioritize the needs of those industry sectors that drive each regional workforce area's economies
- Oppose expansion of workers' compensation benefits
- Oppose predictive scheduling policies
- Support requiring state contractors to hire Connecticut residents first
- Support the portability of worker's sexual harassment certification training

## EDUCATION & CHILDCARE

- Increase funding and subsidies for early care and education programs, allowing childcare centers to open additional classrooms
- Align graduation and school accountability index requirements to focus on career readiness and provide new paid internship opportunities
- Maintain funding for vocational-technical schools and for advanced manufacturing programs at CT State Naugatuck Valley and other community colleges
- Align school curricula with industry-sector workforce needs
- Support policies and initiatives that promote STEM and trade training opportunities for a post-high school career
- Support duplication of Children's Community School model

## MANUFACTURING

- Continue to support the Northwest Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership
- Overhaul workforce apprenticeship hiring ratios to boost manufacturing and trades job growth
- Support initiatives of the Legislature's Manufacturing Caucus
- Maintain funding for the Manufacturing Innovation Fund
- Execute recommendations from the i4.0 Working Group
- Support working with the CT Manufacturing Collaborative to develop ways to support manufacturers in Connecticut
- Support the Chief Manufacturing Officer's efforts to expand promotion of and training for manufacturing careers in the state

## HEALTHCARE

- Continue to support the Northwest Healthcare Regional Sector Partnership
- Allow small businesses access to affordable, high-quality health insurance options for employees
- Support policies that ensure the healthcare infrastructure in greater Waterbury remains available to support the entire community and region
- Convene a group of stakeholders to work with the state to produce a comprehensive plan to mitigate the exponential growth in the Medicaid program
- Support measures that strengthen Connecticut hospitals and health systems and recognize their vital importance to the economy and health of local communities
- Support requiring the state to strictly follow federal Medicaid reimbursement rules and guidelines and reject cost-settling on a "fee for service" rate-based reimbursement system
- Maintain current funding levels for behavioral health care and oppose further reductions
- Use Waterbury's model for healthcare spending reform to reduce state retiree healthcare costs
- Support a two-year moratorium on new insurance mandates

## PUBLIC SAFETY

- Expand collaboration between community business leaders and local CGA Public Safety and Security Committee
- Increase funding for local law enforcement on-scene behavioral health services
- Reexamine treatment of repeat and juvenile offenders to ensure the safety and wellbeing of law-abiding citizens
- Support the reconsideration and modification of the Police Accountability Act of 2020 to better support law enforcement

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

- Continue to support jobs and enhance efforts to market Connecticut as a tourism destination
- Support further state and local involvement in the CTC- Connecticut Tourism Coalition
- Support downtown Waterbury revitalization efforts, including efforts to revitalize the central business district
- Support economic development efforts to revitalize Naugatuck, Southbury and Watertown/Oakville
- Support Main Street Waterbury and its mission to revitalize the city's downtown
- Support legislation to enhance the business environment across the Greater Waterbury region and each municipality's development efforts
- Maintain the state's investment in the Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Support the Arts & Culture Collaborative of the Waterbury Region

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Make business investments in renewable energy more attainable by eliminating savings ratio requirements for related capital projects
- Promote new biotech industries by incentivizing the creation of more lab space
- Support full funding and current structure of the CT Energy Efficiency fund
- Support the exemption of the prevailing wage requirement for Brownfield funding and projects
- Review and modernize Brownfield remediation statutes and regulations, streamline permitting process, and conforming state rules to federal standards
- Support expediting environmental permits required for business starts and expansion
- Support the Waterbury Naugatuck River Greenway Project and protection of the region's waterways

## REGULATORY REFORM

- Continue to support CBIA ReimagineCT Policy Pledge
- Create a unified economic development mission across state agencies
- Advocate for legislation balancing the prosperity of small businesses along with the life challenges its employees may face
- Monitor new data privacy provisions aimed at small and medium sized businesses
- Recognize equivalent out-of-state licenses for those moving here
- Support a two-year suspension of costly unfunded state mandates
- Support reforms of the Transfer Act

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support I84 expansion to Danbury
- Enhance transportation project visibility and improve last-mile options
- Support on-time replacement plans for the I-84/Route 8 NewMix
- Prioritize & fund infrastructure maintenance and repair projects complete improvements to the Waterbury rail line
- Maintain funding for evening bus service in Waterbury and approve matching funds needed to support bus service on Lakewood Road and in the city's South End

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