

2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



DANVILLE PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce represents just under 600 businesses employing approximately 20,000 people in the Dan River Region. The Chamber strives to project a unified voice on key issues that affect the business community in our region.

Our Chamber believes that our region's and the Commonwealth's success depend on investments and priorities that stimulate and advance economic growth and prosperity for businesses **of all sizes**. **With the ongoing challenges and uncertainties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic**, we respectfully request our legislators support the following priorities:

Business Climate and Economic Development

We support initiatives to maintain Virginia's position of economic leadership by growing and diversifying the state's economy through the creation of state financial incentives, technical support, and other assistance that will encourage collaboration on private-sector growth and job creation by business, education and government in each region.

- Protect Virginia's existing Right-to-Work laws, **as this is a key to attracting and retaining industries and small businesses in the Commonwealth.**
- Support funding **for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and GO Virginia** to uphold Virginia's standing as the #1 state for business.
- Expand funding for rural broadband **according to the Governor's timeline, recognizing that it is an imperative for equitable opportunities related to economic development, telework, telemedicine, entrepreneurship and education.**
- **Postpone implementation of the minimum wage increase from May 2021 until the Commonwealth's economy has returned to pre-pandemic levels.**
- Support the Governor's Opportunity Fund and other State-directed incentive programs.
- Support existing enterprise zones in Danville and Pittsylvania County.
- Promote the integration of small business and entrepreneurship development in statewide economic planning efforts.
- Encourage more small business development financing, venture capital formation and tax incentives.
- **Maintain the original purpose and regional representation of the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, which was established to revitalize tobacco-dependent communities, and has resulted in transformational change throughout Southern Virginia.**
- Support the continued development and marketing of large-scale industrial parks, **including, but not limited to the Southern Virginia Megasite at Berry Hill**, that serve multiple jurisdictions and foster enhanced collaboration within a region, specifically through the Virginia Economic Development Site Characterization Program.
- Support continued tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development, and promotes prosperity for all Virginians.
- **Promote a mix of reliable and affordable energy sources that lead to viable solutions in our region.**
- Support for transportation improvements **including, but not limited to:** upgrading Route 29 to interstate status; designating Interstate 785 for the connecting lanes and on 29 bypass; **finalizing US Highway 58 as a four-lane highway;** and continuing funding for design and construction of I-73.

Education and Workforce Development

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber recognizes that the availability of a technically skilled, trainable labor force is the most persuasive location and expansion factor sought by businesses today, and supports the development of programs and processes that focus on demand-driven jobs that offer at least a living wage.

- Support increased funding for internships, apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities.
- Mindfully fund a public education system that begins at birth, strengthens the focus on early childhood education and continues through post-secondary education.
- Support the recognition and designation of localities and regions that achieve the “Certified Work Ready Community” goals as established by ACT, Inc.
- Expand funding **not only** for certified training programs and non-credit workforce training, **but also for FastForward and the G3 program.**
- Support state policy that aggressively tackles the skills gap, especially in the ‘middle skill’ occupations.

Healthcare

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce supports innovation to transform Virginia’s health care system into a competitive advantage through improvements in population health, cost, access and quality.

- Support legislation that allows the creation of Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs), which offer pooled purchasing arrangements for health plans to support health care affordability and accessibility for small businesses and their employees.
- Promote public policy and private efforts to improve individual wellness and population health, including but not limited to managed care for public health program participants, employee wellness efforts, **continuation of payment parity for telemedicine visits beyond the COVID-19 pandemic**, and community health efforts.
- Support efforts to protect access to quality healthcare in our region and our Commonwealth, including opposing efforts to repeal Certificate of Public Need in ways that threaten patients with higher costs or jeopardize access to care.

