



Chair's Message

BY KATIE K. WILKINSON

It's difficult to believe how quickly another year has passed and that 2020 represents the start of a new decade. At the Chamber, we are very excited about the prospects for a prosperous 2020 for the State of Delaware and the many businesses that call the First State home. Many of our top priorities in 2019 will continue to be areas of focus for 2020. These priorities include:

- Advocating for streamlined regulations and permitting
- Monitoring and controlling health insurance and health care costs
- Investment in workforce development

Regulatory and permitting reform saw positive movement in 2019 with the creation of the *Delaware One Stop* registering and licensing portal for businesses, and the Delaware Business Roundtable has taken the lead on the *Ready in 6* initiative to augment existing momentum. It is critical for us to continue to improve the overall approval process for development projects that will attract new businesses and growth industries to the state while also allowing existing Delaware employers to thrive.

Our members continue to provide feedback about the need to have more affordable health care plan options for their employees and cost-effective plans for employers. The cost of health insurance continues to be a primary concern for most employers. One option under consideration represents a shift from current practices and would allow for association health plans to operate in Delaware. Association plans would allow small businesses to come together to collectively lower the cost of employer-provided health insurance – thus providing more affordable and varied programs for employees.

Lastly, and of critical importance throughout the entire state, is our need to continue to focus on workforce development. In October I had the pleasure of attending our Developing Delaware event as well as the Sussex County Today and Tomorrow Conference, where we heard from Michelle Taylor from United Way; Cerron Cade, Delaware's Secretary of Labor; and other community leaders on the topic of social mobility. Both events

covered the critical need to help people reach their full potential and the consistent need to find talent.

We need to design initiatives that will increase our ability to attract, grow and retain emerging and experienced talent across all industry segments. Our key to success will be a laser-focus on both recruitment and development – a “skill up” commitment.

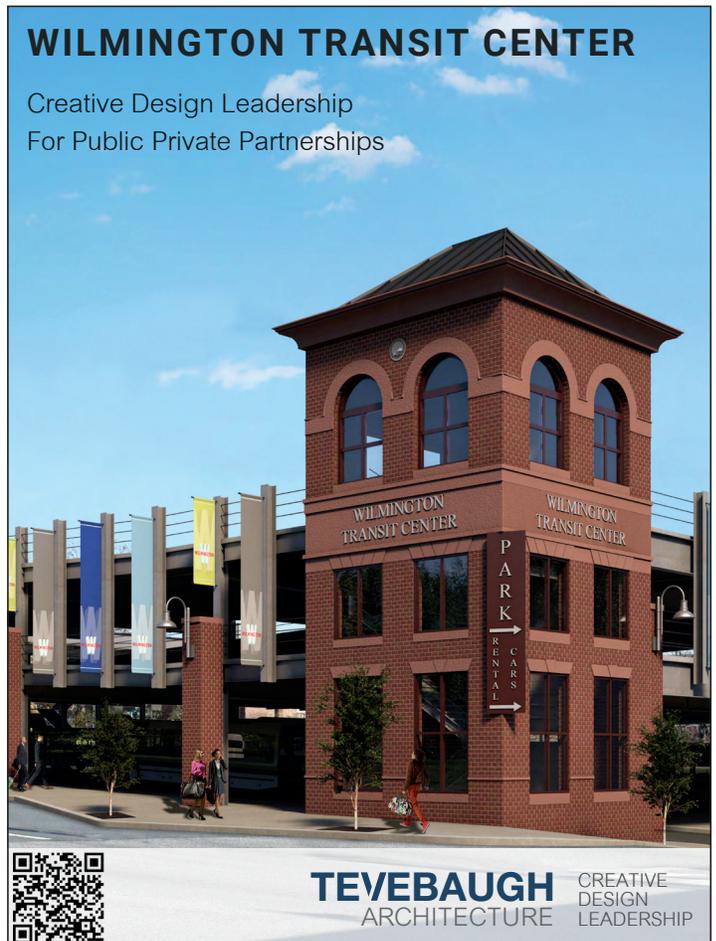
As a chamber, we will continue to work with the Delaware Prosperity Partnership to focus on all opportunities that will bring new businesses and new industries to Delaware.

One quote by Secretary Cade specifically resonated with me: “We can be fast by ourselves, but go further together.” We need to support people in the workforce to encourage mobility! Our success in stopping the “out-migration” of talent, and consistently improving opportunities for people to work in jobs where they feel valued will be directly dependent on our ability to be adaptable, collaborative, creative and nimble.

As a small state, we have the unique opportunity to access our legislators, business leaders, educators and community influencers to accomplish a great deal and achieve our goals. To be successful in these endeavors will require action and accountability on the part of everyone. I am very excited about what lies ahead for our state and for us at the State Chamber in 2020!

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