

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

Chamber Priorities to Help People and the Economy Recover

BY JAMES DECHENE

AS THE 151ST General Assembly prepares itself to gavel in on January 12, 2021, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce respectfully offers a number of policies that, if enacted, would assist the business community in rebounding from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time help Delaware workers find new opportunities. Here are a few examples:

Tax credit for Rapid Workforce Training and Redeployment Initiative hires

This past summer, Governor Carney issued Executive Order #43, which established the Rapid Workforce Training and Redeployment Initiative, a time compressed curriculum to be focused on in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The program will make available certificate and certification programs, and access to the Today's Reinvestment Around Industry Needs ("TRAIN") program to help prepare Delaware workers who may have been displaced by the impact of COVID-19 find a new career path. The State Chamber recommends a refundable tax credit be made available to employers who hire graduates from these programs much the same as the credit for hiring veterans and those with disabilities.

Engage in creating process related efficiencies in oversight agencies

In recent years the State Chamber has focused on the process log jams that serve as impediments to development in Delaware. By working with agencies like DelDOT, the Chamber worked to streamline plan review process, resulting in simple project submission documents for a number of common projects, like curb cut-outs and driveway access. The Chamber has commitments from DelDOT to continue to find ways to streamline these processes, and is pleased to hear DNREC plans to do the same. These partnerships serve to find innovative solutions to issues without sacrificing public input and holding accountable applicants with incomplete application submissions.

Focus on childcare

It is estimated nationally 30% of childcare facilities will close permanently due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact to employers and employees will be felt across all sectors and become a challenge for all to overcome. Access to childcare is increasing in importance as businesses



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continue to reopen and expand operating capacity. While not a crisis in Delaware yet, the State Chamber urges a proactive response by the General Assembly to prepare for this eventuality.

In addition, the State Chamber will be working with our Federal delegation to make much needed changes the CARES Act. A top priority change would be to extend the deadline for spending appropriated funds. Many programs Delaware directed CARES dollars towards, including the expansion of broadband, are long-term investments. More time is also needed to complete construction. While the State can appropriate these dollars, it is next to impossible to actually spend the money prior to the current March 31, 2021 deadline. Other priorities include an expansion of COVID-19 testing to help ensure businesses remain open, which in turn helps state finances and negates a need for tax increases next year.

2021 is bound to continue this period of change and transition. With the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic still being felt, the possibility of a vaccine being developed and distributed, along with a new President, Congress, Administration, and our own General Assembly, the business community should prepare itself to be more nimble than ever with change happening at lightning speed.



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