2020 State Public Policy Agenda

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Iowa’s workforce challenges remain a top concern for our member businesses. A strong education system is critical to meeting our region’s current and future workforce needs. We must bring our schools back to world-class competitiveness and return our reputation as the best education system in the nation if we want to encourage more people to stay, return to or discover Iowa as a place to live. Iowa must support innovative initiatives and programs that develop needed skills and encourage business collaboration and alignment with K-12, community colleges and universities to maximize local efforts to build Iowa’s talent pipeline. Additionally, we encourage the legislature to examine ways to modernize and improve the education funding formula in a way that serves all school districts and allows school boards to effectively manage their financial resources to meet their responsibilities.

➢ Support funding requests for PK-12 public schools and Grant Wood AEA. It is imperative that this year’s Supplemental State Aid (SSA) increase should reflect our state’s economic growth and compensate for necessary past funding shortages.
➢ Support funding requests for Kirkwood Community College and the University of Iowa, including their economic development activities that grow and diversify the state’s economy.
➢ Support funding Future Ready Iowa initiatives, including the Employer Innovation Fund and Last Dollar Scholar program, without diverting funding from other local and state efforts to build our talent pipeline.
➢ Support public school districts’ ability to determine their individual district needs by allowing for flexibility in categorical fund spending.
➢ Support innovative teaching in public PK-20 schools to help meet the skills demand of Iowa’s workforce, including supporting additional resources and programs that certify teachers for computer science training, increase of STEM classes for middle and high school students, support intermediary network growth to address increased demand for high school student internships and teacher externships, the implementation of a comprehensive next-generation assessment system designed to measure learning skills in order to better align students with the careers of tomorrow and post-high school credentials and apprenticeship programs.
➢ Support policies that address the child care “cliff effect” to increase access to quality and affordable child care assistance and allow more employees to enter the workforce. Additionally, support policies and programs that incentivize businesses, communities and nonprofits to develop solutions that address child care shortage and increase affordability.
➢ Support policies that help prepare offenders for successful reentry to Iowa communities and employment, including the expansion of high school equivalency diploma pathways and apprenticeships that train workers in a career pathway while earning credits toward an equivalent diploma.
➢ Support policies that welcome all populations to Iowa, allowing businesses to attract a diverse workforce and cities to compete to host community events.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Iowa has been able to successfully leverage economic development incentives to continue growing the economy, and these programs are key to keeping Iowa competitive. Economic development incentives have contributed to capital investment across the state, creating thousands of jobs, encourage investment in Iowa and must be protected. We will continue to advocate for tax policies that lead to economic growth and job creation, further simplification and predictability of the code, promote tax fairness and fiscal responsibility. Additionally, we encourage the on-going review and analysis of agency rules and regulations to promote a business environment that fosters the entrepreneurial mindset and works to grow our economy.

➢ Protect key economic development incentives that demonstrate a positive return on investment particularly those that work to further innovation, workforce and development.
Support simplification and fairness in additional tax reform, as well as innovation in the tax code to attract potential investment, such as allowing businesses to organize as Benefit Corporations or “B-Corps” to attract entrepreneurs interested in the incorporation of social responsibility into money-making practices to attract and retain younger talent to the state.

Support the reasonable use of tax increment financing (TIF) and other programs as economic development tools to assist in the recruitment, retention and expansion of business. These tools must be used to grow tax base and contribute to new opportunities for all our citizens.

Protect the state’s commitment to backfill cities, counties and schools.

Encourage the modernization of a reliable federal employment verification (e-verify) system to check works documentation and discourage a state by state approach.

Support the region’s efforts to create an AV-ready driving environment for the safe movement of people and freight through policies that further the effective and successful research, development, testing, operation, and implementation of automated vehicles in the state of Iowa.

Support leveraging technology and innovation for educational instruction and testing to encourage further growth of the EdTech industry.

Support pro-growth business regulations for the hemp industry, as well as clarity on state regulations on hemp-derived products as permitted to the extent of the federal law.

As rules and regulations are reviewed and explored, ensure outcomes focus on simplification, growth, fairness and fiscal responsibility.

Support policies that lead to a more affordable and flexible health care system for employers and employees.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Iowa needs to keep more Iowans in the state and attract new populations to make their home here and contribute to our economic growth. Part of accomplishing that is creating desirable and robust communities with a great “quality of place.” Community placemaking projects and recreational opportunities are vital to Iowa’s workforce attraction and retention strategy. High quality and reliable infrastructure systems are also central to economic growth. We encourage long-term planning and examination of innovative funding mechanisms to make the necessary resources available to communities for significant capital investment improvements.

- Secure sustainable and permanent funding sources to assist communities with placemaking projects that spur economic growth and workforce attraction and protect Iowa’s natural resources.
- Support funding sources and flexible policies to address needed water infrastructure improvements, including full funding of the Iowa Flood Center.
- Support efforts to attract broadband investment and expand access throughout the state.
- Support funding for general and commercial aviation infrastructure plans that allow Iowa businesses to compete in a global marketplace, including expanding Iowa’s sales tax exemption that currently applies to “air carrier” to include all aircrafts. Iowa businesses remain at a competitive disadvantage with businesses in neighboring states without this tax exemption expansion.

2020 Federal Public Policy Agenda

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Higher education is an economic driver in our region, and a crucial element in meeting our workforce challenges. We support policies that connect local workforce strategies with local economic development strategies and education policies and programs that align with the workforce strategy needs of tomorrow. Additionally, ensuring skilled, qualified workers continue to have the ability to live and work in the United States will help meet current and future labor demands and drive innovation and entrepreneurship. This is an integral part of solving the workforce shortage in Iowa, and across the country.

- Support immigration reform that allows employers further access to skilled workers, including reaching a permanent solution for recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a reliable federal employment verification (e-verify) system feasible for employers of all sizes and industries, and updating the Visa system to allow more workers to enter and stay in the U.S.
- Support funding priorities for Kirkwood Community College, including allowing Pell Grants to be used for short-term, workforce-oriented programs.
- Support funding priorities for the University of Iowa, specifically robust funding for federal financial aid programs and research programs at the federal agencies.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Local economies and businesses from all industries benefit from investment of federal dollars in research and development, and funding for research granting agencies ensures Iowa continues to benefit from these dollars. We are encouraged by recent improvements to the federal tax code and regulatory rules. Tax, regulatory, trade and energy policies should encourage capital investment and global competitiveness, promote and grow local economies, provide equal treatment across industries and individuals, be responsible and expand access to additional markets. Businesses and their employees rely on certainty and predictably and to that end, we encourage a sustainable, flexible and affordable health care system, as well as permanent industry tax credits that grow Iowa’s economy.

- Support funding requests for research granting agencies that work to grow local economies and address nationwide challenges.
- Support policies and programs that make it easier for Iowa small business owners, entrepreneurs, manufacturers and farmers to sell their products abroad by eliminating taxes, tariffs and other trade barriers on American goods.
- Support policies that safeguard businesses and consumers from risks, including cyber attacks and data privacy breaches.
- Support the examination of new policies that provide a sustainable, flexible and affordable health care system that will take more of the burden off small business owners.
- Support reforms to the Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement formula to bring fairness and equity to the current system.
- Support efforts that encourage students to engage in innovation, invention and pursue entrepreneurship.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Long-term funding for transportation and infrastructure that allows access to communities of all sizes will allow Iowa to maintain our current systems and build and improve to be competitive. Safe roads and bridges, reliable transit systems, and accessible airports and broadband are vital to community growth and competitiveness.

- Continue to fund transportation grant programs such as BUILD, that meet the needs of all communities.
- Support investments in transportation testing and demonstration, including next-gen automated vehicles.
- Support measures to address the nation’s pilot shortage, including lowering financial barriers to the profession and increasing the number of pathways to accrue the necessary experience to ensure sustainable and competitive regional air service.
- Support increasing the cap on the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) to allow the Eastern Iowa Airport the ability to improve, expand and upgrade airport facilities and remain competitive.
- Support implementing a long-term sustainable funding solution and next generation infrastructure research to meet the nation’s infrastructure needs, including high-speed broadband.
- Support an increase in the supply of affordable housing through increased federal appropriations for key housing and community development programs, and the expansion of federal housing tools.
- Support the federal government’s commitment to programs and projects to improve flood mitigation efforts, including flood protection and forecasting.
- Support the Opportunity Zones program to encourage long-term investment in under-developed and lower income neighborhoods.
- Support a universal charitable deduction that will encourage taxpayers to support their communities.