

# PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

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2019–2020

**GROWTH AND INNOVATION**

THE GREATER CLEVELAND PARTNERSHIP



## OUR MISSION

To mobilize private-sector leadership, expertise and resources to create attractive business conditions that create jobs, grow investment and improve the economic prosperity of the region.



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For Forward CLE to be executed, it must be adequately supported by an integrated, aggressive GCP Public Policy Advocacy Agenda—constructed by and for our members.

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# INTEGRATED PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA SUPPORTING “FORWARD CLE”

As numerous, thoughtful leaders in Northeast Ohio strategically shape and mold what our distinct, dynamic communities and celebrated city will look like five, 10, even 20 years from today, the Greater Cleveland Partnership (GCP) vigorously continues to serve as the primary leader on issues to improve the economy of Cleveland. GCP is the largest regional chamber of commerce in the nation, with the backing of more than 11,000 unique companies in various industries. Our sheer numbers offer all GCP members the chance to have a powerful, collective voice. But, it is our members’ nonpartisan, tested, savvy views and experiences that build trust with policymakers—translating into meaningful advocacy results for the advancement of our region.

In unveiling the 2019–2020 GCP Public Policy Agenda, this document identifies barriers and proposes some familiar and some less familiar solutions in support of the business community and their employees to bolster weak links and allow for a burgeoning economy. A commitment to diversity and inclusion is a necessary, fundamental part of each initiative. Increasing wealth and opportunity among all Clevelanders will only be realized by understanding the importance of equity as a key to regional economic growth. We encourage one and all to become further engaged in this important work to lift and strengthen the unique people and institutions that distinguish our area from others.

Our economy is changing rapidly, as all are, but the GCP mission remains clear: To mobilize private-sector leadership, expertise, and resources to create attractive business conditions that create jobs, grow investment, and improve the economic prosperity of the region. Collaboration among new and current stakeholders—specifically officials that form and enact public policy—is a key ingredient if we are to sincerely foster revolutionary innovation for all and tackle challenges and bridge gaps that stand in our way.

As the business community’s primary private economic development platform, GCP launched our Forward CLE Strategic Plan in 2018. Like the Forward CLE member-driven process GCP initiated, our Public Policy Agenda was developed with direct input from local business leaders, ranging from entrepreneurs and small business owners to CEOs of the largest corporations. Utilizing the feedback gained from our various partners, Forward CLE focuses on activities that are pivotal to advancing economic development in our region.



**SCOTT CHAIKIN**  
*Executive Chairman*  
Dix & Eaton



**JOSEPH D. ROMAN**  
*President and CEO*  
Greater Cleveland Partnership



In order to succeed, Forward CLE must be adequately supported by an integrated, aggressive GCP Public Policy Advocacy Agenda—constructed by and for our members—and it will always adapt as needed. Statements within this installment of the GCP Public Policy Agenda do not restrict or confine our advocacy work or larger mission. On the contrary, our members' Public Policy Agenda drives and empowers our broader vision in an adaptable way in a disruptive economy as organizations throughout Northeast Ohio reinvent and adjust to new waves of consumer preferences. Once again, we look forward to leading the charge, engaging all parties to pursue this agenda on behalf of our fellow colleagues and all citizens that call the Greater Cleveland area home.



**Leadership Opportunities**

Connecting employers to the right existing solutions and more aggressively addressing our most critical talent gaps;

Leveraging knowledge and relationships to connect more companies and entrepreneurs with available resources to create the right solutions for our members;

Driving investment, development and business support to targeted neighborhoods.



**Opportunities for CEO Perspective Leading to Action**

Reducing the geographic gap between the region's job hubs and its current and potential workers;

Accelerating innovation and commercialization efforts for Northeast Ohio;

Expanding international and domestic air service.



**Big Questions to Unlock Growth**

Conducting a diversity and inclusion assessment;

Administering a tax impact study and creating recommendations.

# GROWTH & INNOVATION

One of the more substantial responsibilities the GCP Government Affairs Council performs is the creation of a biennial public policy agenda. For the better part of 2018, GCP endeavored to produce a purposeful 2019–2020 GCP Public Policy Agenda that continues to focus on fundamental priorities that strengthen and protect our assets while keeping the cost of doing business in our area competitive, which is essential for progress to take hold and flourish. It is equally important we in the business community push the envelope, launching new initiatives and pathways ahead.

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With that in mind, GCP convened meetings with numerous members, government entities, and partners over the last year. The labor-intensive process used to arrive at our advocacy priorities bears mention, in that it was strategically conducted to gather substantial insight and learn more about the policy issues that are of greatest importance in a way that allows GCP to influence and impact Ohio's biennial budget process. The policy statements that follow are a direct result of the feedback we received and include activities on many of the specific challenges and solutions our employers and our workforce face today.

Based on the broad swath of responses GCP received, our agenda is organized and assembled into three primary categories: An Adaptable Government & Public Sector; A Sustainable & Predictable Tax & Regulatory Environment; Talent Development & Retention to Advance Business Growth. The specific issues raised in each section are not only important to our membership, but they are areas in which GCP can have the greatest influence or impact. All the issues contained in the latest iteration of our policy agenda align with the GCP advocacy tenets that guide our work.

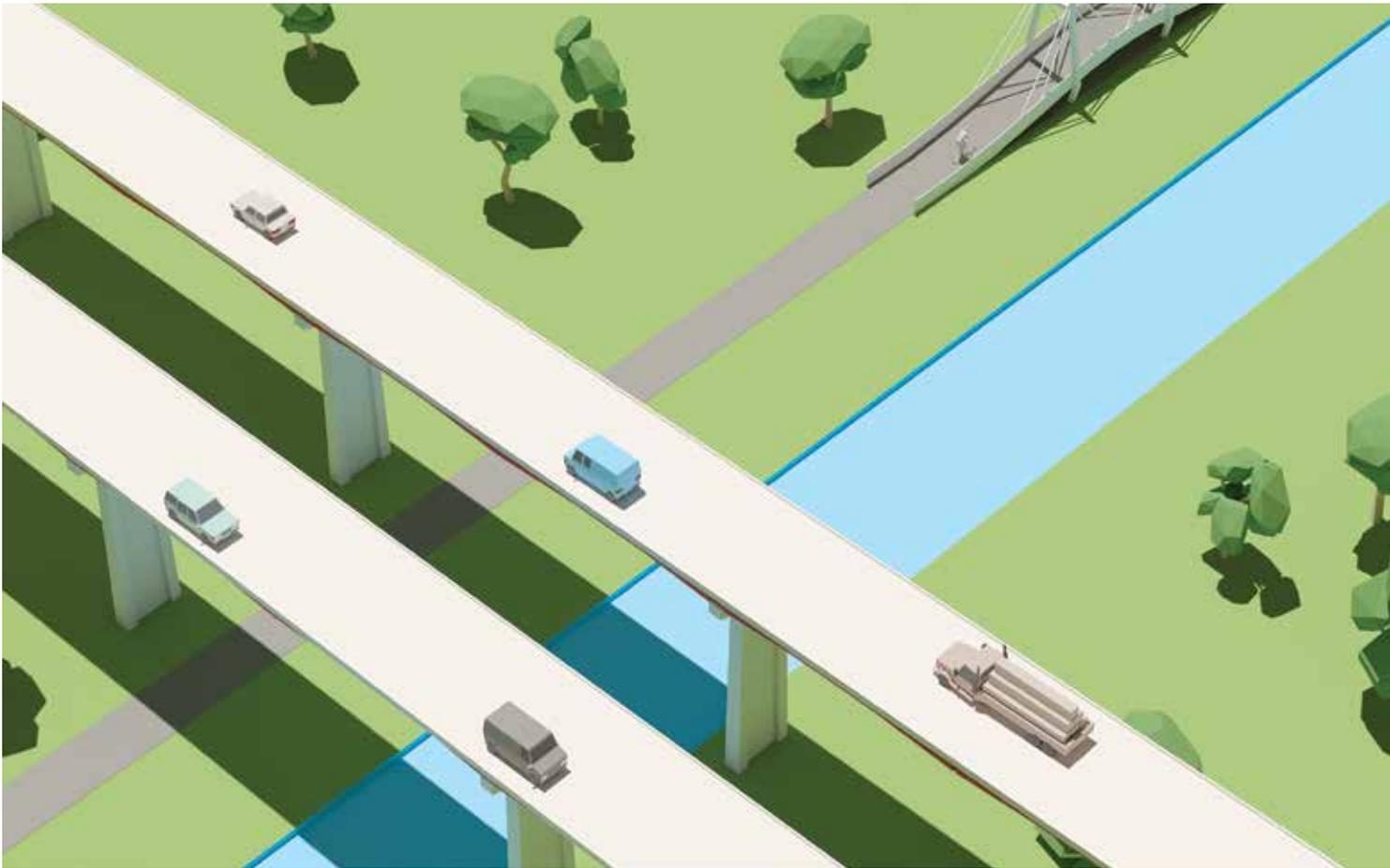
Ultimately, our objective is to improve our region's quality of life, foster a competitive environment, and retain jobs; simply stated, our charge is to continue encouraging policies that cultivate growth and innovation in our region.

**Our agenda is organized and assembled into three primary categories:**

**An Adaptable  
Government & Public  
Sector**

**A Sustainable &  
Predictable Tax &  
Regulatory Environment**

**Talent Development &  
Retention to Advance  
Business Growth**



### **Forging an Inclusive & Equitable Region**

Fortunately, Northeast Ohioans possess at our disposal the characteristics and know-how needed to achieve and sustain success. A fundamental commitment to diversity and inclusion will continue to be a considerable part of the initiatives we choose to engage in over the course of the next two years. Forging an inclusive and equitable region is a desirable trait, but only if our statements translate into consequential change. Accordingly, it is critical the tools we have in place are protected and bolstered if the benefits we aim to reap, such as growing our population, are to be realized. Success on this front means minorities will have the ability to more fully participate in the advantages of, and contribute to, economic development in Northeast Ohio.

Looking back, Cleveland was the first settlement founded in the Western Reserve. During the late nineteenth century, Cleveland morphed into a prosperous industrial city. And, Cleveland has always played an important role in national politics and determining the landscape. Since GCP's inception, our advocacy activity has strengthened our competitiveness and vitality for continued economic prosperity and we have enjoyed some significant victories.

For our region and Ohio to effectively leverage the groundwork laid before us, we must be even more determined to increase our stature and worth—inclusively—if we are to harness unrealized opportunities. Our members' agenda sets the government advocacy bar high, our resolve in enacting it is stronger than ever, and we encourage you to join and participate in our shared cause.

# RECENT GCP ADVOCACY SUCCESS

## 2016

- **Suspended Cleveland-Only Minimum Wage Effort**
- Protected Private Employer Right to Govern HR Matters
- Passed City Income Tax Improving Services & Security
- Supported Cuyahoga County Health & Human Services Levy
- **Championed Cuyahoga County Diversity & Inclusion Ordinance**
- Supported Legislation that Paid Ohio's Unemployment Compensation Federal Debt
- Secured Reforms to Ohio New Market Tax Credits Program
- Shared NE Ohio Perspective Before 2020 Tax Policy Study Commission
- **Guaranteed Medical Marijuana Employer Protections**
- Secured Employer Representation on Ohio Medical Marijuana Advisory Committee
- Obtained \$23M for GCP-Prioritized Projects in State Capital Budget Bill
- Supported Dredging of Cuyahoga River and Protected Lake Erie from Open Lake Dumping
- Instituted Workers' Compensation Subrogation
- Supported Small Claims Dispute Legislation
- **Launched a Small Business Regulatory Toolkit**
- **Secured State Funding to Complete the Transformation of Public Square**

### 2017 Highlight

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**Championed NASA Glenn Research Center and DFAS Cleveland in Federal Appropriations**

### 2016 Highlight

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**Renewed Cleveland Schools Levy**

# 2017

- Ensured Continuation of the Cleveland Transformation Alliance
- Supported Successful Passage of Port of Cleveland & Tri-C Levies
- Defeated Deceptive Drug Pricing Measure
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- Achieved Greater Petition Transparency Locally
- Backed Use of Specialized Business Courts
- Supported Computer Science Standards for Schools
- Achieved CyberOhio Advisory Board Representation
- Avoided Legislation Infringing on Employer Hiring & HR Rights
- Improved Job Creation Tax Credit Provisions
- **Hosted & Supported JobsOhio**
- Created Statutory Microbusiness Definition
- Preserved Ohio's Small Business Tax Deduction
- Favored Workers' Compensation Wellness Programming Assistance
- Hosted Office of Workforce Transformation
- Provided Federal Tax Reform Perspective
- **Changed Policy to Strengthen Water Quality Efforts in Lake Erie**
- National Small Business Association Small Business Congress Chaired by GCP Board Member
- Joined Ohio Business Competes, an Organization Committed to Anti-Discrimination Policies
- Created GCP Energy Task Team

# 2018

- Eliminated Duplicative County Consumer Provisions
- Supported Reducing State Regulatory Restrictions
- Promoted Intrastate Crowdfunding Legislation
- **Common Sense Initiative Small Business Advisory Council Representation**
- Supported Bi-Partisan Congressional Redistricting Measure
- Performed Regional Competitive Tax Analysis
- Convened RTA Operational Improvement Tax Force
- **Secured Nearly \$30M in State Capital Bill Support for GCP Priorities**
- **Led Process to Recommend Greater Cleveland Opportunity Zones**
- Provided Thought Leadership on Protecting Federal and Defense Assets
- Contributed to BOLD Ohio Report, an Analysis on Ohio's Growth in the Innovation Economy
- Led Advocacy Work of the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition
- Hosted Roundtable Discussion with Senator Rob Portman on Trade Policy
- Supported Passage of County Legislation to Support Industry Sector Partnerships
- **Reached GCP Political Action Committee Fundraising Goal for Third Consecutive Year**
- Passed Occupational License Review, Anti-Predatory Business Claim Legislation
- GCP Member Named National Small Business Association Board Chair
- **Achieved Cybersecurity Safe Harbor, Included Blockchain Definitions**

# LEADING PRIORITIES

In addition to various core priorities GCP will continue to champion, the 2019-2020 GCP Public Policy Agenda focuses on three leading focus areas to allow for and advance growth and innovation in Northeast Ohio: An Adaptable Government & Public Sector; A Sustainable & Predictable Tax & Regulatory Environment; Talent Development & Retention to Advance Business Growth.



An Adaptable  
Government &  
Public Sector

A Sustainable  
& Predictable  
Tax & Regulatory  
Environment

# **Inclusive & Equitable Region**

Talent  
Development  
& Retention to  
Advance Business  
Growth

# AN ADAPTABLE GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SECTOR

With change in public sector leadership, comes exceptional opportunities. Fortunately, GCP is well-positioned to advance the business community's interests at the local, state, and federal levels of government into the future.

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Government processes and programs that were once designed to ably serve the public in their day and age are in swift need of a reset or refresh in distinct and different ways. Among the many core priorities identified, our members particularly yearn for institutions that not only serve employers as effectively and efficiently as possible, but those that place Ohio and our region at the forefront of cutting-edge modernization and thought leadership.

Small businesses, middle-market companies, and larger corporations are compelled to perpetually readjust and reimagine to survive and thrive. Government, at all levels, must also fluidly adapt to the needs of the times to properly serve our urban, rural, and suburban neighborhoods to build goodwill, inject capital, and establish an environment that allows employers to add sustainable jobs.

## Innovation Agenda

Ohio is changing. Technology innovations are impacting every corner of the state's economy. To keep pace with the rest of the nation (and the world) Ohio must adapt to these changes and capture every opportunity to strengthen our economic growth—for the benefit of those who live and do business here today and those we hope to attract in the future.

Ohio has a solid economic development foundation to build on thanks to government programs—like the Edison Centers, Third Frontier and JobsOhio—that have targeted public investment in strong and emerging industries critical to the state's growth. But our work is far from done. A new Administration creates an opportunity to rethink our approaches to how we bolster economic development statewide.

For too long Ohio's signature economic development programs have operated in silos when the reality is our core industries—next generation manufacturing, health care, information technology, and infrastructure—are interconnected and rely on each other to be successful. Further, while Ohio has made progress in assisting diverse, innovative, high-growth firms, it has an incredible opportunity to establish itself as the state with the greatest focus and ability to attract, support and accelerate the growth of diversely founded and led companies.

Now is the time to align and leverage the state's key programs and incentives to form a robust economic development strategy for Ohio that builds on best practices and addresses areas of underinvestment. With a solid focus on innovation and entrepreneurship; strengthening business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts; updating development tools that help to transform the physical landscape of Ohio cities; and innovating our approaches to workforce development, we can achieve success in moving Ohio forward for many generations to come.

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**The Ohio Third Frontier  
has become the state's  
largest and most  
successful economic  
development program.  
This \$2.1 billion  
initiative has a 10:1  
return on investment.**

## **The Next Frontier of Innovation**

As traditional manufacturing started to decline, state leaders sought to identify and support high-growth technology industries that would reinvigorate the state's manufacturing strength and be the drivers of Ohio's future economy. This was the impetus for the Ohio Third Frontier, created in 2002 and reauthorized by voters in 2010. The program was designed as an investment in a comprehensive set of programs that would encourage collaboration among research and industry platforms, as well as spur research and commercialization activities and new technology formation.

The Third Frontier program has been in existence for 17 years and has been critical for the formation of a technology-based entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ohio that is creating thousands of well-paying jobs as well as billions of dollars in additional investment. Ohio's ecosystem of technology-based entrepreneurs is strong and growing due to support from the Third Frontier. Yet without continued funding, the needed momentum to further scale the companies and entrepreneurs that are driving economic growth in the state will be lost.

Prior to the final spend down of funding authorized by the 2010 ballot initiative, a strategy to reauthorize the state's research and development bonds at comparable levels to the Ohio Third Frontier is needed. Core components of this new strategy must include:

- Doubling down on investments in minority and rural entrepreneurs, including strengthening existing state tools that support these populations (like the MBE and EDGE certification programs as well as the Rural Jobs Tax Credit) and leveraging them with increased investment from renewed bond funding.
- Continued funding for pre-seed and early stage capital as well as entrepreneurial services, both supported through the Entrepreneurial Services network created by the Third Frontier.
- Expanded funding to support increased creation and attraction of Series A and B funds in Ohio.
- Increased incentive to leverage partnerships between companies and higher education institutions with start-ups and high-growth firms on research, development and commercialization opportunities. This includes revamping the Technology Investment Tax Credit and the Ohio Venture Capital Fund.
- Targeted investments in key industry platforms that are driving growth and innovation in Ohio—next generation manufacturing, future health, data analytics and smart infrastructure.
- Making “big bets” like developing a water innovation ecosystem driven by support of protecting the quality and economic opportunity of Lake Erie and Ohio riverways.
- Investments in the infrastructure that will support digital inclusion and technology-based economic development statewide, including broadband, improved municipal services, and public transit and mobility.

## **Strengthening Economic Development Tools**

JobsOhio—the statewide economic development organization—was created to ensure that Ohio could move “at the speed of business” in major economic development deals. Since its creation, this entity has played an important role in Ohio's economic rebound. Moving forward, there are key opportunities to strengthen JobsOhio and maximize business and economic development in the state, including:

### **Providing grant assistance for brownfield redevelopment**

At a time when there is demand for increased development in core cities, a major barrier is the lack of viable local and state resources to address brownfield redevelopment. Ohio's Clean Ohio Brownfield Revitalization Fund, created in 2002 with final funding awarded in 2013, provided grant assistance to communities to redevelop brownfield sites. This program had notable success. Clean Ohio leveraged more than \$10 of investment per grant dollar through the redevelopment of more than 380 former commercial and industrial properties, creating more than 3,800 acres of clean development land. Ohio must provide increased grant assistance to local communities for this work. Further, JobsOhio should remove a current restriction that an end-user must be identified for communities to qualify for brownfield redevelopment support. New policy approaches should be explored, including awarding brownfield redevelopment grants based on comprehensive site strategies and demonstrated connection to major job hubs.

### **Developing a package of viable incentives that support business retention and expansion**

While business attraction is important, economic development data shows that over 75% of all job growth comes from business expansion and retention. Ohio must create and refine innovative tools, such as tax incentives and grant resources for business retention and expansion, job creation and job growth in key industries to bolster support for Ohio-based companies.

### **Continuing to enhance and improve the JobsOhio delivery platform in Northeast Ohio**

There are 18 counties and four metro areas in Northeast Ohio which is unique in the state. Currently, JobsOhio utilizes one regional partner to cover the geography even though it is approximately double in size to any other JobsOhio territory. It represents nearly 40% of Ohio's total population, GDP, business establishments, and employment. In 2017, JobsOhio, Team NEO, and GCP jointly created a complimentary approach to improving business retention, expansion, and attraction delivery in the Cleveland area. Further enhancement in Cleveland and other metro areas of Northeastern Ohio is worthy of consideration to recognize the economic capacity of the four metro areas.

## PLACES WITH IMPACT

A sense of place strengthens a community and its ability to attract and retain the talent, commerce and opportunity that impacts its people. GCP will continue to strengthen investment tools and assist in the creation of new ones that will support downtown, neighborhood and lakefront development.

### New Market Tax Credits

The federal and state New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) programs have played an important role in redevelopment in distressed communities across Northeast Ohio. Cleveland Development Advisors (CDA), an affiliate of GCP, has proven itself to be one of the nation's most successful community development entities. CDA has been awarded more than \$200 million in NMTC and is deploying these resources successfully in projects that are generating nearly a billion dollars in economic impact and significant job creation and growth in distressed communities. Transformational projects span the range from the successful renovation of the Ameritrust Tower Complex to recent investments in Glenville Circle North to support Mayor Jackson's Neighborhood Initiative. In addition to supporting the continuation of Ohio's NMTC, GCP has long advocated for the permanency of the federal NMTC in the tax code and will continue to do so as a new Congress considers modifications to the tax reform law and takes up the fiscal year 2020 appropriations process.

### Opportunity Zones

The 2017 tax bill signed into law included a provision that creates the Opportunity Zones program. The goal of the Opportunity Zones program is to allow investors to defer capital gains from the sale or exchange of property by investing the proceeds in an Opportunity Fund. The fund would invest these assets in a qualifying census tract that has, among other criteria, a poverty rate of at least 20%. Ideally, this program is another development tool to increase revitalization efforts in distressed communities.

Due to GCP's established leadership with the New Market Tax Credit program, the organization played an active role with the Kasich Administration and Cuyahoga County political and civic leaders to guide a process for the selection of Opportunity Zones for Greater Cleveland. GCP will support the development of local strategies to determine the best way to implement Opportunity Zones in a way that compliments and leverages the purpose and strength of the New Market Tax Credit program and other development tools that help to revitalize low-income communities.

## REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

The Fund for Our Economic Future's *Two Tomorrows* report states that the vitality of a region's economy depends on its ability to connect people to good jobs. A strong public transportation system is the foundation of this connectivity and Northeast Ohio is at a pivotal moment with its regional transit system.

Compared to other states, Ohio underfunds its public transit system, in terms of state general revenue support. The state has been ranked 14th nationally for public transit ridership but in the bottom 10 for state funding. Local regional transit authorities—like the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA)—largely rely on a “piggyback” sales tax to support operational costs. Cuyahoga County has supported nearly \$200 million annually through the sales tax. This represents nearly 70% of GCRTA's operating revenue, making the system one of the strongest locally supported compared to its peer group. However, with declining ridership and employment growth in locations not easily served by GCRTA, the organization is forced to make increasingly tough choices to reduce routes and/or raise fares. GCRTA will likely need to pursue a new tax or tax levy increase to sustain Northeast Ohio's transit system from further decline.

A safe and reliable system that supports continued growth and economic competitiveness by connecting people to jobs and other amenities and services must be the core focus of GCRTA's future. GCP is actively working with GCRTA leadership to perform an in-depth financial analysis of the current system to make recommendations on its future, including the structure of a potential levy request. GCP also supports a dedicated and well-funded state investment in public transit. Ohio has the opportunity to support transit agencies statewide by incentivizing operational efficiencies and innovations, including system redesign connected to critical job hubs and addressing issues related to “last mile” service.

While public transportation is important, the future of mobility in Northeast Ohio will not solely rely on rail lines and bus routes. Mobility innovations are needed to prepare cities for the varied ways that people commute, including bridging “last mile” connections for public transportation. GCP is currently working with the Fund for Our Economic Future on a worker mobility strategy to improve access to jobs in Northeast Ohio. GCP will also work with GCRTA and other key partners to determine the local, state, and federal regulatory barriers and opportunities that prevent and can make way for increased mobility options for the region.

## GOVERNMENT MODERNIZATION & EVOLVING TECHNOLOGIES

### Innovation

It's no mystery most successful businesses are responsive and nimble in nature. It's also natural and prudent for the GCP business community and all Ohio taxpayers to expect comparable attributes from government and receive similar services on multiple fronts.

Associations and partnerships among cities in the region that streamline processes characteristically appeal greatly to entrepreneurs. Identifying additional areas for regional cooperation by bringing civic leaders together—from across the region—will also allow government entities to achieve even greater savings that may be passed on to the public.

If the businesses that support and reinvest in our communities are genuinely going to surge and develop over time, substantive collaboration that meets the business community's needs is paramount. Regional collaboration through digitized record keeping to business retention and anti-poaching policies, for example, can offer more responsive solutions to the industries and markets being served. GCP encourages shared services offered to municipalities and other multi-jurisdictional local government agencies within our footprint to continue and evolve.

An additional promising path forward is gaining steam that could allow our state and Cleveland to lead the country in making sensible, diligent government improvements. Ohio and its local political subdivisions can better serve its customers by enlisting the talent and expertise necessary to implement reliable, ground breaking practices that protect Ohioans' data and transactions. New methods to protect those who live in distressed areas is incredibly, particularly important. Sustainable, user-friendly processes for everyday activities and government interactions—like securing a permit, certificate or license—should constantly be reevaluated and updated. Enter blockchain.

Cleveland leaders have organized around an initiative to enhance our regional economy through blockchain—contemporary technology with a modern, unique ecosystem. The local effort, referred to as BlockLand, is focused on how to further position Cleveland on the cutting edge of technological advancement.

The Greater Cleveland Partnership has played a key role in conjunction with BlockLand efforts, supporting legislation that was signed into law in 2018 that acknowledges the legitimacy of blockchain transactions by affirming that both electronic records and electronic signatures may be created through use of blockchain technology.

GCP encourages policies that enable institutions of higher education to include evolving technologies, like blockchain, within their curricula and research activities to retain and attract the necessary coders and IT talent in the public and private sectors. We are committed to promoting the secure, modern technologies needed to modernize government and for the betterment of Northeast Ohio and our members.

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## GUARDING OHIO'S CONSTITUTION THROUGH PETITION TRANSPARENCY

The first amendment of the U.S. Constitution affords us the ability to petition government, properly protecting our fundamental right to publicly participate in government. In Ohio, however, unfamiliar individuals or organizations are often using outside funding sources and taking specific steps to submit proposed state Constitutional amendments to the people for a vote on issues that may not warrant a change to the Ohio Constitution.

A number of assorted versions of citizen-initiated Ohio Constitutional amendments have been introduced over the years. Some outsiders view Ohio's citizen-initiated amendment process as fertile ground and attempt to take advantage of voters by trying to modify the Ohio Constitution to impose their own agendas, regardless of the cost.

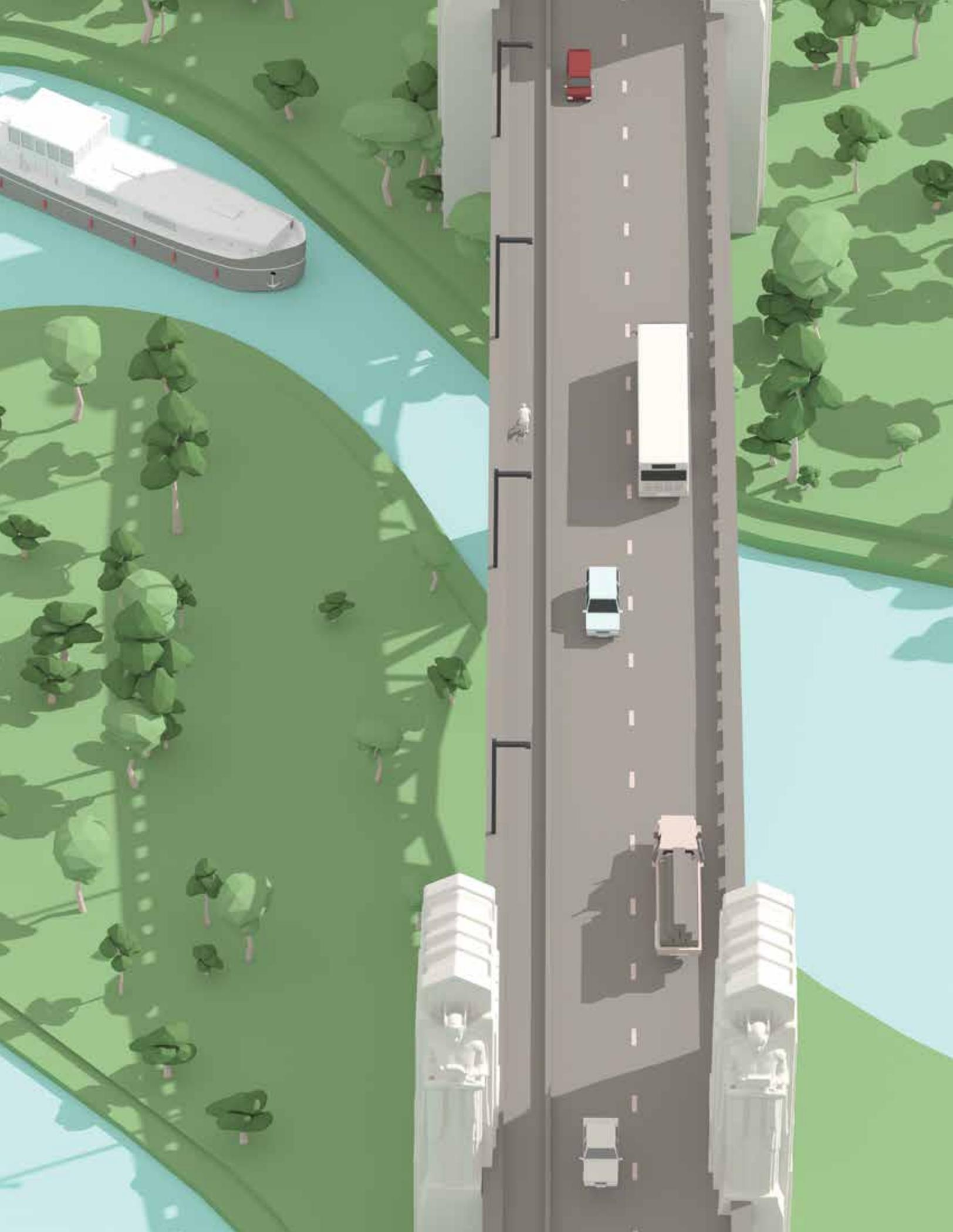
GCP members have expressed great concerns over this trend and parts of the process in place for petitioners to place an issue on the ballot. Locally, external interest groups have tried to bring forward a destructive part-time workers' initiative and a Cleveland-only minimum wage that would have placed the city at a disadvantage. Meanwhile, Ohio voters have more recently been presented with a measure reducing drug possession offenses to misdemeanors through an amendment to the Constitution. The challenge with enacting many of these statewide proposals is that once language is entered in the Ohio Constitution it becomes extremely difficult to change over time and, after all, the overarching purpose of a state Constitution is to design and create a government framework.

GCP contends Ohio citizens should clearly continue to express their rights and have the ability to go to the ballot when essential issues arise. It is true that some of the proposals to amend the Ohio Constitution have stalled before reaching the ballot or served as "new and improved" versions of themselves to achieve the same general purpose. Still, the steep number of controversial proposals presented to the public gives GCP membership considerable pause. Even well-intended ballot proposals and campaigns can severely limit the way businesses can strengthen and grow.

Under current law, there is no prohibition against an initiative petition or referendum petition circulator receiving compensation. It is debatable whether petitioners should continue to be able to receive financial compensation for their services. But, our members believe it is clear greater transparency is needed in this arena. To help shine more light and greater clarity on who is behind these campaigns in Cleveland, GCP supported a proposal making it mandatory for circulators of petitions to file an itemized statement that provides more information on that individual's petition circulation experience. Ohioans have the right to better understand the people and the organizations that are powering such high-stakes efforts.

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# A SUSTAINABLE & PREDICTABLE TAX & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Even as recent reforms have been made and different blueprint policy initiatives are regularly being introduced and reviewed, GCP members consistently state that two of the greatest obstacles to increased economic expansion is an ever-changing tax code and complex rules and regulations that must be continually monitored. At the federal level, for example, the IRS spent \$495 million in funds just to implement the new tax law in FY2018–2019. And, according to one National Small Business Association survey, the average small business owner spends more than 80 hours each year dealing with federal regulation.

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## GCP TAX ANALYSIS

America's convoluted tax code and the financial burden imposed to properly comply is considerable. Simplicity and savings for all business sizes that promote investment and employment must be accomplished. Retroactive tax extensions and favorable tax provisions that unceasingly change harm our job creators' ability to plan and discourage long-term investment. Furthermore, entitlement spending must be overseen responsibly if we are to improve the long-term sustainability of the federal budget. And, a U.S. Supreme Court decision—pertaining to states' ability to collect sales tax from online retailers that do not have a brick and mortar, or physical, presence within the state—set a precedent to allow states to collect sales tax from all online purchases, which is an issue worth monitoring.

In Ohio, GCP continues to support greater government efficiency to allow for a reprieve on income taxes—dollars that could be injected back into the economy. Shifting the burden from one group of businesses to another exacerbates already existing challenges for Ohio businesses.

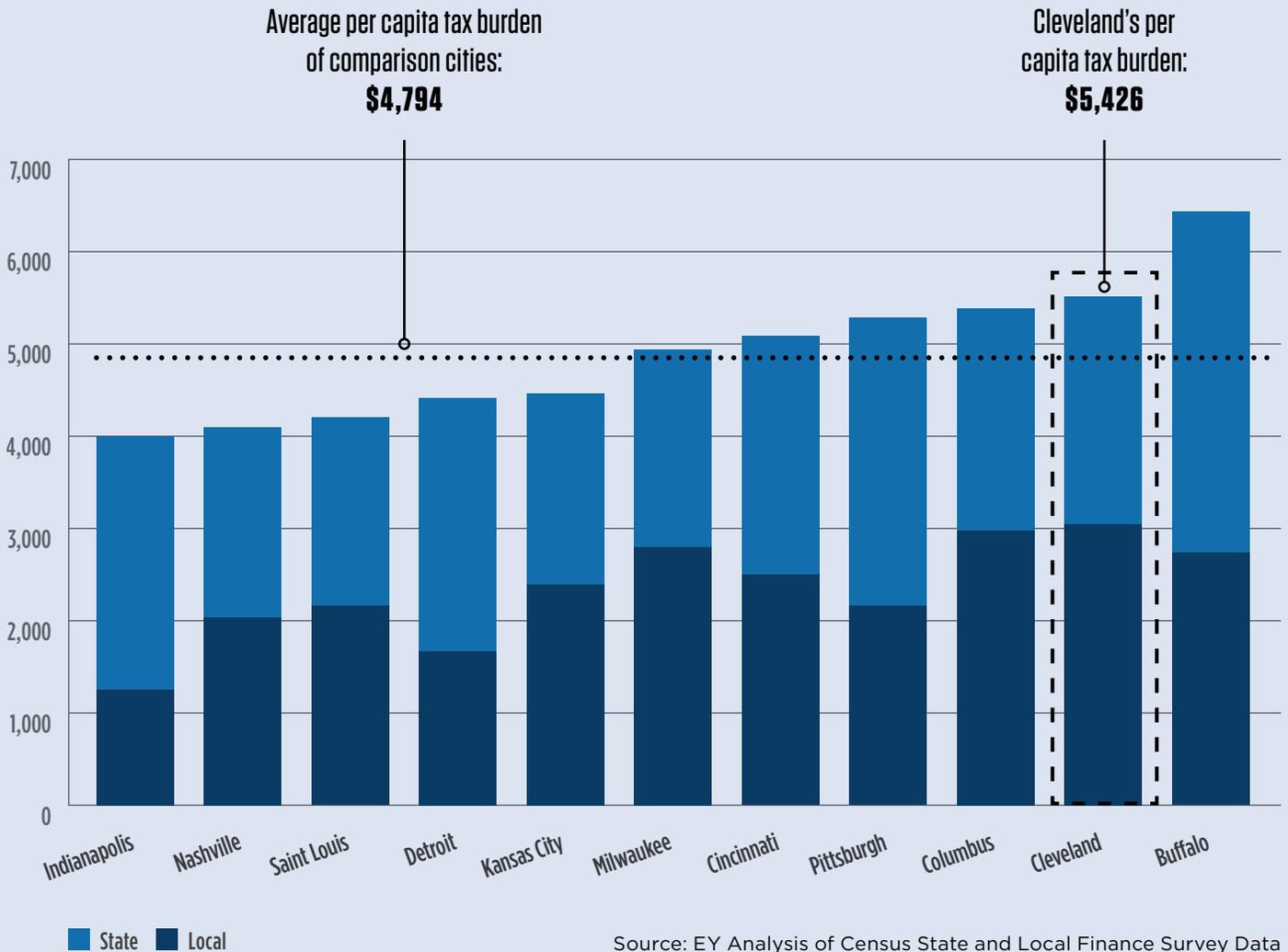
GCP recognizes preserving Ohio's small business tax deduction on the first \$250,000 in business income has encouraged investments for small businesses. However, the deduction should remain for those it was truly intended for, small businesses, not freelancing businesses that change their business structure to gain an unfair advantage. Our concern also remains with proposals that attempt to increase Ohio's sales tax and we have consistently opposed an expansion of the sales tax base. It is equally important policymakers lower or maintain the current commercial activity tax (CAT) rate and uphold today's CAT exemption level to remain competitive with the tax structures that exist in states that surround Ohio.

Employers know taxes and public sector services are critical to enable our region to help prevent "brain drain," gain population, and compete for talent. GCP has been highly supportive of a wide array of local tax initiatives, allowing for additional opportunity and prosperity. The accumulation of well-intended initiatives can create a piling-on effect, however, that is a source of concern for many GCP members who are acutely invested in our neighborhoods and focused on creating attractive business conditions. As a nonpartisan voice for the Northeast Ohio business community, GCP strives to better comprehend the intentions and context of future levy endeavors and the overall impact our tax structures have on our members and our communities.

**GCP's Strategic Plan, Forward CLE, calls for a better understanding of Greater Cleveland's tax environment and its effect on growth and competitiveness.**

As a result, GCP has conducted a comprehensive tax analysis—comparing our region to similar markets in the Great Lakes region. The initial data retrieved suggests Cleveland's per capita state and local tax burden (\$5,426) exceeds the average burden (\$4,794) levied on comparable cities in our region:

**PER CAPITA STATE AND LOCAL TAX BURDEN (2016)**



Feedback from our members will continue to be the key part of our decision-making, as GCP uses the data compiled in the tax study to analyze specific proposals when an institution or campaign is seeking GCP's endorsement of a specific issue. GCP will strongly encourage entities that seek to alter a tax structure to clearly communicate their objectives early in each election cycle and adhere to GCP's member-driven review process and new protocols on awarding

campaign funds. Included among the many factors our business leaders will continue to consider, when analyzing future tax proposals that could harm our progress, are: the purpose of the tax levy; the services or benefits it aims to provide the taxpayers; the precedent in other communities for the type of levy and a comparison of rates; alternatives considered by the proponents; and, accountability measures built into the proposal.

## RESPONSIVE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Methods and mechanisms put in place to establish, analyze, and modify regulatory rules vary throughout each prong of government. Given the variety of requirements imposed on business owners, it is important policymakers act to reduce the complexity of compliance to ensure enterprises are not disproportionately burdened. As a result, GCP subscribes to several common principles our members ask elected leaders and agency administrators to consider when it comes to evaluating whether specific government guidelines are reasonable and conducive to spurring economic development:

- Simple, straight-forward language should be used.
- Transparent procedures and operations should be in place.
- An inclusive process should be applied.
- Opportunity for feedback and participation is essential.

Regulatory challenges should not prevent future entrepreneurs from starting their own business. GCP prefers systemic checks and balances, if there is to be a reduction in the costs associated with an authority's rules. An important step that cannot be overlooked is the utilization of an appeals process to the regulatory agency itself or a third-party, where stakeholders may request for a regulator to reconsider uncompromising decisions or unique cases.

### Regulatory Fairness Board

The nonpartisan Regulatory Fairness Board, part of the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of the National Ombudsman, is one such tool that assists small businesses in coping with overly burdensome federal regulations, providing grassroots feedback and advice to the National Ombudsman on matters relating to compliance with federal agencies. Certain regulations are required throughout all levels of government, but resources and the ability to take action within and outside of an agency ought to be a prerequisite to properly assist businesses of all sizes and affect positive change when necessary.

### Ohio Common Sense Initiative (CSI)

GCP believes in local, state, and federal techniques that allow for vigorous input from Ohioans on regulations. This is why we call for an expansion of Ohio's Common Sense Initiative (CSI), with proper legislative oversight, to allow civilians and organizations to more easily locate, adjust, and sometimes discontinue regulations that unduly impede business productivity and job expansion. Having reviewed thousands of rules since its inception, CSI has provided a model that should be replicated at the local and federal levels to address unmanageable, dated regulations.

Our intentions include GCP's continued representation on the CSI Small Business Advisory Council and active efforts to ensure participation from business owners and their representatives on new and proposed revisions of rules or regulations.

### Occupational Licensing Reform

Licensing in Ohio has resulted in business people spending hundreds, in some cases, thousands of dollars to earn a license to begin their career. This can be damaging—particularly for small businesses—for entry into the market and competition. Many in the Northeast Ohio business community believe it is past time for a full review of the number of occupational licensing agencies Ohio has in place and the requirements many professions are mandated to meet or acquire and maintain a license. Reforming Ohio's licensing process is a commendable goal our members supported—via legislation that was signed by the Governor in early 2019—and GCP will continue to support and monitor new state processes that:

- Require all occupational licensing boards to be renewed regularly, in a public forum, before the legislature;
- Create a process for concluding the business and operation of an expired board and allows any person to engage in an occupation if the board that licensed that occupation has expired; and
- Streamline paperwork, consolidate forms and harmonize data and due dates.

Few will argue with the fact that the licensing of definitive industries is imperative, but laborious, unnecessary impediments to employment that make it harder for qualified, skilled workers to find a job should be inspected.

## **Medical Marijuana**

GCP will continue necessary advocacy efforts on the implementation of medical marijuana in the State of Ohio. Given the complexities of medical research on the benefits of medicinal marijuana, GCP did not take a formal position on the state medical marijuana legislation that is now Ohio law. Pending federal legislation also exists that would exempt states with legal cannabis laws, like Ohio, from federal cannabis law enforcement. Our members' proactive course of action was to work with key state partners to successfully secure employer rights' provisions in the legislation to ensure employers were not prohibited from establishing and enforcing a drug testing policy, drug-free workplace policy, or zero-tolerance drug policy.

A Medical Marijuana Advisory Committee was formed to provide guidance on the implementation of the law. A GCP member was appointed by the Governor to serve on the committee to represent employers' views as regulatory proceedings continue. As Ohio swears in a new Governor and the program is fine-tuned as needed, our members will be prepared to ensure the employers' rights we fought for remain, allowing employers to choose to enforce a drug-free workplace.

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# TALENT DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION TO ADVANCE BUSINESS GROWTH

Attracting, developing and retaining the best talent in Northeast Ohio is a key priority for the business community. This includes a focus on developing diverse talent and inclusive retention strategies to keep them in the region. Likewise, supporting the growth of small and mid-market businesses is essential to job creation strategies. GCP, through its work with the Commission on Economic Inclusion, continues to develop and execute strategies to support and advance the growth of minority-owned companies. As the region and state prepare for further growth in the innovation economy, government must align talent and business development resources so that people are prepared for career pathways in the key industries that will drive future growth.

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## INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Research has shown that despite the state's best efforts, Ohio's gross domestic product lags overall national growth. This slower pace has manifested itself in slower population growth, slower growth in income and wages, increased poverty, and an aging and nondiverse population. Further, advances in technology on a global scale are disrupting virtually every sector. To be competitive, private- and public-sector leaders must pursue strategies to make Ohio an attractive place for people to live and work. To ensure that businesses and workers are competitive and successful in an innovation economy, Ohio's workforce development system must evolve to meet these demands. Ohio's workforce development system must evolve to meet these demands, including:

- Auditing Ohio's workforce development and job training programs to assess current performance and determine what "flex" funding is available to steer toward priority opportunities in the state's economy. Ohio has roughly 100 workforce programs across 13 state agencies. The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act alone provides close to \$330 million to Ohio for workforce programs with up to 15% of that funding available to the Governor for discretionary statewide programs. There is real opportunity to determine how to steer these and other flexible dollars (including state resources) to support job training needs in the industry clusters that are driving Ohio's future growth—advanced manufacturing, health care, smart infrastructure, and data analytics. This should include funding for career technical education, starting at the high school level, in key industries.

- Funding Industry Sector Partnerships that address training and talent pipeline issues in key industries. Industry Sector Partnerships are a proven best practice to develop and enhance career pathways for workers in specific industries. Public and private partners collaborate to provide the needed services to individuals to prepare them for jobs that businesses need to fill. Ohio provided pilot funding for industry workforce alliances in the six JobsOhio regions in 2014. This initiative provided useful information on how to support these partnerships statewide, but funding ended at the conclusion of a one-time grant that made the pilot possible. Ohio must commit meaningful and ongoing resources for this work. The state should support the scale and growth of these partnerships through a RFP process in core industries like advanced manufacturing, health care, infrastructure, and information technology.

Further, the Administration and legislature must continue to invest in programs that support workforce development like the Job Creation Tax Credit and the Incumbent Workforce Training program in addition to new incentives that will encourage talented workers to stay in or return to Ohio for job opportunities. GCP also supports smart criminal justice reform policy that creates greater opportunity for returning individuals convicted of low-level offenses to find meaningful employment and develop career pathways.

Finally, there is an appropriate role for government intervention, particularly at the state and local levels, to craft a population growth agenda to assist in retaining our region's and the state's talent. Our businesses need people to continue backfilling positions and growing jobs—and they also need customers. Ohio should explore policy options, including possible tax incentives, to keep more of the individuals who are from here and/or educated in the state.

## ADVANCING MINORITY BUSINESS GROWTH

Small businesses play an important role in Ohio's economy. Government can support the growth of these companies through smart tax and regulatory policies in addition to support for increased access to capital, improved operations, and job creation. It is well documented that minority businesses need targeted support for equitable access to tools for business growth. As some of the fastest growing start-ups, advancing the success of minority businesses is necessary for the state's overall economic prosperity. To strengthen minority business development and growth, Ohio must:

### **Reestablish the Minority Business Advisory Council (MBAC) through executive order in 2012 to advise the Development Services Agency and Department of Administrative Services on matters impacting minority businesses statewide.**

However, in recent years this Council has not been active. New leadership should recommit focus on the MBAC by expanding its counsel to include JobsOhio and appointing successful business executives from small, mid-market and large companies across the state.

### **Review the administrative rules for the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Encouraging Diversity, Growth and Equity (EDGE) programs for necessary reforms.**

The MBE and EDGE programs were enacted in state law in 1999 and 2003, respectively. Timely review of the rules and legislation that inform these state programs is needed to ensure they are responsive and relevant to the needs of minority businesses across the State of Ohio. This should be a focus of the Common Sense Initiative, which was created to ensure government regulations were supporting business and economic growth, not hindering it.

### **Encourage state funded organizations to achieve at least 15% spending with minority businesses.**

Ohio, in the past several years, has consistently met its 15% MBE goal, creating opportunity for minority businesses to grow. They should promote this effort among state funded organizations to support greater growth in contracting opportunities for minority firms.

## REFORMING IMMIGRATION POLICY

GCP has long supported and will continue to support smart, comprehensive immigration reform. Immigrants play a vital role in the growth and economic competitiveness of the region and state. GCP and the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition, in partnership with the New American Economy, published a 2017 report that captured the impact of immigrants on the Great Lakes region. Between 2000 and 2015 immigrants have helped to revitalize and strengthen industries like manufacturing and health care through innovations and job creation; offset population decline; and reinvigorate local economies with new businesses, an increased tax base, and consumer spending that helps drive local growth. Immigrants represent 5.5% of Greater Cleveland's population, in 2014 paid \$1.2 billion in taxes and held \$3.2 billion in spending power. Greater Cleveland's immigrant population is highly educated, with 43% having a bachelor's degree or higher, and are starting businesses and creating jobs that benefit the regional economy.

As Northeast Ohio and the state seek to strengthen workforce and business development efforts, attracting and retaining a skilled foreign-born talent pool must be a part of these strategies. GCP will continue to support long-term immigration reform at the federal level in addition to comprehensive H-1B visa reform that increases the number of visas for highly skilled talent employed by U.S. companies. GCP will also explore regional approaches to H-1B immigration policy that can help spur population growth in older industrial cities like Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown.



# FUNDAMENTAL PRIORITIES

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## LGBTQ Protections

- Talent development is an economic issue. Ohio cannot truly be competitive in attracting the best and brightest if basic civil rights are not available for all current and future employees. GCP will continue to advocate for public policies that add gender identity and sexual orientation to the protected classes under civil rights laws.

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## Education Reform

- GCP will continue to support the Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools, including pursuing any needed modifications in state law that drive the success of the Plan. GCP will also work closely with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to ensure that future levy requests are aligned with the talent development needs of the region's growing innovation economy.
- GCP will support, and in some cases lead, advocacy on core state public policies championed by Ohio's business community. This could include initiatives from the recently created state policy group Ohio Excels—with which GCP is intimately involved. Key areas of current focus are improving educational access and attainment for students as well as rigorous academic standards that ensure students are college- and career-ready.

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## Historic Preservation Tax Credit

- Ohio's Historic Preservation Tax Credit has been instrumental in aiding the transformation of abandoned, vacant buildings in downtown Cleveland and its neighborhoods into vibrant properties. The economic impact of this program is well documented. GCP will oppose any efforts by the state legislature to discontinue the program or convert it into a block grant. Further, GCP will partner with key community partners and developers to pursue needed modifications to the tax credit to strengthen the program for future development. GCP will also continue to advocate for the reauthorization of the federal Historic Tax Credit.

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## EB-5 Program

- GCP supports the reauthorization of the EB-5 program in the short-term. Long-term, GCP will advocate for the program's permanency in law and an expedited visa process to support ongoing investments in transformational development projects.

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## Strengthening Essential Development Tools

- GCP will continue to support the development of transformational public projects, such as development along the lakefront and Cuyahoga River, including Irishtown Bend and the Flats; Opportunity Corridor and the W. 25th Street Corridor, including the MetroHealth Campus Transformation project; and support for the Great Lakes through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- GCP will partner with key community partners and developers to pursue needed modifications to outdated state laws to ensure they are responsive to the physical development needs of current and future projects in Greater Cleveland.

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## Protecting Federal & Defense Assets

- NASA Glenn Research Center and Plum Brook Station are important economic drivers in the region and play a key role in regional and state efforts to strengthen the innovation economy. The center employs more than 3,100 highly skilled workers and has an overall \$1.3 billion economic impact to the State of Ohio. GCP will continue to maximize opportunities and minimize risk for NASA Glenn during the federal appropriations process.
- Industry partnerships are an important part of NASA Glenn's economic impact of the region. To advance the commercialization opportunities for the research and development innovations happening at NASA Glenn, GCP will explore, and where possible lead, any viable effort to maximize the economic impact of the center's work in Northeast Ohio. GCP will support efforts with Cuyahoga County to strengthen the aerospace industry in the region. GCP will also work with Ohio's congressional delegation to maximize contracting opportunities for the region and state with NASA and defense installations that would benefit from the expertise of Ohio companies.
- GCP played a lead role to reverse a Department of Defense (DoD) decision to close Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Cleveland during the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Process. GCP will continue to advocate for DFAS Cleveland in DoD budget and policy decisions, including the potential of a future BRAC.
- GCP supports the creation of a state Office of Military and Federal Affairs to ensure a single point of contact for Ohio on defense and federal asset issues.

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# Competitive Climate & Cost of Doing Business

## **Access to Capital**

- Create additional opportunities and improve access to early-stage and working capital—particularly for small and minority businesses statewide.
- Protect and enhance critical U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) loan programs and increase lending caps as appropriate.

## **Air Service**

- GCP will remain engaged with airport leadership regarding a long-term solution to the U.S. Customs process for international travelers arriving at Hopkins.
- Obtain commitments for an international air service attraction fund to attract a direct flight to Europe on a full-service airline.

## **Comprehensive Trade Reform**

- Through its work with the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition, GCP will continue to advocate at the federal level for smart trade policies that strengthen Ohio’s connection to the global economy.

## **Cybersecurity**

- OHTec, a technology industry advocate and support resource within the GCP, focuses on building relationships and a strong technology industry within Northeast Ohio. A GCP volunteer leader serves on the CyberOhio Advisory Board, which is a collaborative that helps businesses fight cyberattacks.
- Enhanced cybersecurity should provide clear, simple steps for companies to follow when their data is breached and must balance the need for greater information sharing with privacy rights. GCP will support the establishment of streamlined policy guidelines and protocols to ensure the protection and security of business and government online data and financials.

## **Energy**

- The GCP/COSE energy team provides a consultative review of its members’ energy costs and strategies at work and at home to ensure they are effectively managing their energy needs.
- We support energy infrastructure investments that increase accessibility, safety, health, and wellness and allow for economic development, leading to diverse sources and affordable energy and rate setting.
- GCP encourages state leaders to implement policies that provide incentives for utilities to offer businesses opportunities that leverage energy efficiency programming to foster growth. We also recognize and know it is equally important that utilities are provided the level of elasticity needed to meet demanding state mandated energy benchmarks.

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### **Health Care**

- We partner with Medical Mutual to offer choice and flexibility when it comes to offering businesses health care coverage like the Health and Wellness Trust, a multiple employer welfare arrangement (MEWA).
- Our membership will closely monitor the federal initiative that makes it easier for people to buy short-term health care policies or association plans offered by groups of small businesses or self-employed people.
- GCP supports Medicaid expansion in Ohio and is in favor of modernizing Medicaid by extending coverage to more low-income Ohioans to help those in need and deter unfair cost-shifting to others.
- GCP encourages the study of excessive mandates that drive up the cost of care and limit an employer's ability to offer coverage to his or her employees.

### **Human Resources & Labor**

- We are focused on strategic advocacy efforts that will improve Ohio's unemployment compensation system to ensure the unemployed receive the support needed to re-enter the workforce, and that the fund is solvent enough to decrease the need for increased unemployment compensation costs on businesses in the event of a future economic downturn.
- Our members are not in favor of encouraging Ohio to follow a mandated path for paid sick leave. Discussions surrounding the proper minimum wage amount is more appropriately debated at the state or federal levels of government to ensure a level playing field for all and guard against unintended consequences for our businesses, workforce, and local communities.

### **Workers' Compensation**

- GCP offers a group rated workers' compensation program that can provide savings on premiums and safety discount programs.
- We will work to guard safety education program assistance meant to reduce workers' compensation costs for employers while helping injured workers return to their jobs faster through BWC's transitional work program.
- GCP urges the expansion of BWC drug-free workplace training sessions and the BWC pilot program to address the opioid impact on the workforce.

# COLLECTIVE ACTION & PARTNERSHIPS

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## NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

The National Small Business Association (NSBA) is a nonpartisan organization that advocates on behalf of America's entrepreneurs with membership from every state and every industry in the country. Our partners at NSBA offer GCP/COSE small business members an additional access point to meet with members of Congress and their staff and drive federal public policy issues that are of most importance to the small business community.

## GREAT LAKES METRO CHAMBERS COALITION

The Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition is a collective of chambers of commerce across the Great Lakes region that jointly advocate on core policy issues, including water quality, immigration reform, trade, and transportation and infrastructure. Since its founding in 2008, the coalition has become a leading and effective voice on federal policy impacting the Great Lakes region.

## OHIO METRO CHAMBERS COALITION

GCP actively participates in the Ohio Metro Chambers Coalition, comprised of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and the seven other major metropolitan chambers from across the state. The coalition jointly advocates at the Ohio Statehouse on issues of common interest including budget, education, Medicaid, tax and transportation policy issues.

## GREATER CLEVELAND PARTNERSHIP POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (GCP PAC)

The Greater Cleveland Partnership Political Action Committee (GCP PAC) is a nonpartisan, member-driven endeavor committed to advancing the business community's interests by building and reinforcing relationships and supporting candidates and current elected officials at the state and local levels of government. By participating in the political process, we provide our members with a unique opportunity to advocate for an environment that encourages economic growth and prosperity. The GCP PAC represents a strong, unified voice for businesses of all sizes and industries in our region and aids businesses in educating key decision makers on issues that are important to them.

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**The GCP PAC represents a strong, unified voice for businesses of all sizes and industries in our region and aids businesses in educating key decision makers on issues that are important to them.**



# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COUNCIL ROSTER

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