



2024 ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA EXTENDED

Investing in Greater New Haven, Powering Connecticut's Economic Growth



Greater New Haven is experiencing a period of sustained economic growth. Addressing New Haven's barriers to growth and supporting projects and initiatives that boost New Haven is a great investment that benefits the entire state. Connecticut's policies have the potential to create new high paying jobs, diversify our economy, and support growth across all our communities.

On behalf of our region's business community, these are our priorities:

1 | SUPPORT EMPLOYEES AND STRENGTHEN THE WORKFORCE

Currently, approximately 90,000 job openings in Connecticut remain unfilled. Not only does this hurt businesses who cannot hire for their roles, but it also hurts Connecticut's residents who are not being connected to open jobs. We must work to support talent pipelines and address the barriers to workforce entry such as childcare, housing, transportation, and more. Filling open jobs, strengthening the workforce, and ensuring quality of life for residents remains a priority.

- Address the needs of childcare providers and the workforce including the affordability and accessibility of childcare, **recruitment and retention of childcare staff**¹, and funding of the childcare system
- Expand talent pipelines for Connecticut's growing industries (healthcare, bioscience, manufacturing, utilities, and tech) through innovative programs like **CT Tech Horizons**², student aid, and trade programs
- Support violence intervention programs **which support at-risk and disconnected youth**³ to connect them to mentorship, job, and internship opportunities
- Re-evaluate Connecticut's required occupational licenses to address barriers to entry in certain fields of employment
- Support the Arts, Culture, and Tourism industry's long-term sustainable funding which is critical in the changing economy and to retain and attract young and diverse talent
- Increase partnerships with nonprofit Human Service providers and businesses to maintain high quality essential services to residents and provide cost savings to the state which faces an unprecedented number of retirees

¹ There are currently about **4,000 staff vacancies** in the childcare industry in Connecticut. Source: Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

² There is a **16% projected increase** in STEM jobs from 2020 to 2030 with 84% of these occupations requiring a bachelor's degree at least. Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

³ In 2022, one in five of Connecticut's young people, or **119,000 young people**, were either at-risk or disconnected. Source: Study commissioned by Dalio Education

2 | SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

Small business owners and entrepreneurs are the backbone of our economy. They need the legislature's support. They are the first to feel the effects of negative business legislation. They often need additional support to understand and implement new programs as they are busy running the day-to-day operations of their business. While some legislation has been positive, we need to continuously evaluate the effects of new legislation. We ask legislators to support programs to help these business owners and include the business community in conversations regarding new programs and workplace mandates.

- **Address the cost of healthcare for small businesses by establishing association health plans which will allow small businesses to offer competitive plans to their employees**⁴
- Continue efforts to understand state procurement process through disparity study and identify ways in which minority business enterprises can equitably participate in the procurement process
- Eliminate the temporary corporate surcharge and reinstate the pass-through entity tax credit to reduce pressures and costs on businesses
- Continually evaluate the impact of legislation on the business community and the progress of workplace mandates, especially in manufacturing

⁴ Between 2016 and 2021, the average annual single premium per enrolled employee for employer-based health insurance **rose 17.9% in Connecticut**. Source: Kaiser Family Foundation



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3 | INCREASE THE HOUSING SUPPLY

Housing plays a critical role in economic development, the regional workforce, and the region's success. There is currently a supply and demand issue. We need to meet the demand of those who are looking to move to our region and join our workforce. Housing policies have the potential to grow the region and create more economic development opportunities. **If there are affordable housing options for the workforce, we will see continued investments from business that will fuel economic development trickling down to our community⁵.** Housing providers and developers need to be included in the conversation. Let's work together to address the housing crisis.

- **Support the construction of more housing, especially transit-oriented development⁶**
- Continue to incentivize remediation of brownfield sites to build more housing
- Support first-time home buyers' programs that will support increased home ownership

4 | ADDRESS EDUCATION INEQUITIES

The growth of Connecticut's workforce is dependent on the education students receive from Pre-K through higher education. Currently, New Haven's students struggle with math and literacy and there is a rise in chronic absenteeism post-pandemic. At the same time, students attending Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) face uncertainty as CSCU's encounter decreased state funding as pandemic relief funds expire. We ask the state legislature to address educational inequities in our urban centers and remove barriers to entry of higher education.

- Support continued investment to state colleges and universities whose funding is critical to support underserved communities, such as first-generation college students
- Support efforts to increase enrollment at regional colleges and universities by increasing funding for the **Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program⁷**
- Address educational inequities, including the **math and literacy crisis⁸**, chronic absenteeism, and staff shortages
- Incentivize paid internship opportunities for high school students and undergraduate students attending state colleges and universities

5 | INVEST IN TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is critical to Greater New Haven's economic growth. We have seen cuts to transportation in the past, and we hear loud and clear from employers that this impacts their employees from getting to work. We need to invest in transportation infrastructure for New Haven to reach its full potential as a key transportation hub.

- Invest in reliable rail service for commuters and employees in the region by addressing the Shoreline East funding cuts
- **Address the issue of "first mile/last mile" for commuters and employees by supporting increased bus services⁹**
- Invest in high-speed rail projects that create a transfer hub in New Haven such as through reducing commuter rail times from New Haven to New York City
- Support New Haven region's transportation infrastructure such as Tweed New Haven Airport, Union Station, the Port of New Haven, and more

⁵ Approximately 45% of households pay **35% or more** of household income on rent.

Source: 2023 Labor Market Study of Greater New Haven and the Valley

⁶ New Haven needs nearly **8,500 new homes** by 2030 to stabilize rents at its current growth trajectory.

Source: Breaking Ground Report by Elm City Communities

⁷ Connecticut spends **\$259** per enrolled student on state grant aid. The national average is **\$1,020**.

Source: National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

⁸ **87%** of third graders in New Haven are reading below grade level. **83.5%** of third graders are below grade level in math.

Source: New Haven Public Schools

⁹ **44%** of Greater New Haven area residents do not have reliable access to a car.

Source: Data Haven