

STATE AND FEDERAL BUSINESS AGENDA

Building a Positive Business Environment
While Enhancing Our Community's Quality of Life

ADVOCACY and PUBLIC POLICY



Business Resiliency & Taxation

The Manatee Chamber supports the expansion of attainable housing solutions for our workforce and residents' housing needs as well as legislation that provides stability and capacity in the property insurance market to reform litigation, reduce costs, remove burdensome regulations, and increase competition.



Economic Development

The Manatee Chamber supports the marketing of Florida as a business location for corporations and as a premier destination for visitors. We support initiatives that encourage and promote economic growth through business development.



Education and Workforce Innovation

The Manatee Chamber supports improved access to quality early learning opportunities, appropriate per-student funding in VPK-12, higher education initiatives that create greater access to skills training and post-secondary attainment, and investments in workforce education programs in STEM and other high demand fields meeting critical employment needs.



Health and Workforce Wellness

The Manatee Chamber supports legislation that positively impacts access to care and outcomes, including innovative programs, pilot projects, and new technology. We also support measures to encourage additional medical residency slots in Florida, creating a pipeline to solve the healthcare workforce shortage.



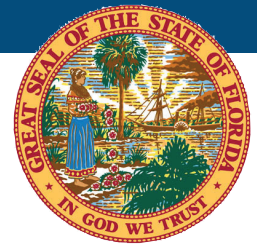
Natural Resources

The Manatee Chamber supports initiatives that improve water quality, reduces harmful algae blooms, and legislative that creates a more transparent regulatory process.



Transportation and Infrastructure

The Manatee Chamber supports legislation protecting the Florida Transportation Trust Fund, cooperative funding for the replacement of the DeSoto Bridge and increased capacity on the Fort Hamer Bridge, as well as expansion of north-south and east-west corridors in Manatee County.



WE SUPPORT

Business Resiliency & Taxation

- Expansion of attainable housing solutions for our workforce and residents' housing needs, including fully funding Sadowski funds for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership program (SHIP) and the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program.
- Legislation that provides stability and capacity in the property insurance market including policies that continue efforts to improve litigation reform, reduce costs, remove burdensome regulations, and increase competition.
- Continued efforts to reduce or eliminate business-related taxes including the Commercial Lease Tax (Business Rent Tax), Communication Services Tax (CST), and Florida's corporate income tax.
- Modifications to the social benefits system that will allow for a gradual exit-path for working families, including enhanced access to childcare benefits.
- Emergency bridge loan parameters that offer flexibility and responsiveness, including extending the loan payoff timeframe and/or reducing the interest rate incurred, due to the uniqueness of business recovery after different types of disasters.

Economic Development

- Continued funding for the Jobs Growth Grant Fund as well as the development of future workforce training programs and community infrastructure.
- Funding for Enterprise Florida to proactively market the state as a business destination and incentivize corporations to relocate to Florida.
- Funding for Visit Florida to ensure the state is a premier destination for visitors nationally and internationally.
- Efforts to enhance support infrastructures that serve residents and businesses during disasters and other significant economic downturns.

Education & Workforce Innovation

Early Learning

- Amending the initial eligibility criteria for working families to access state funded childcare assistance, to align with Florida's growing economy to ensure access to quality care.
- A clear and consistent statewide funding formula for school readiness.

VPK – 12

- An annual increase in the Base Student Allocation commensurate with the rate of inflation and cost of living increases to ensure school systems can meet the rising costs in every aspect of their business.
- Including Pre-Kindergarten classroom teachers to the definition of K-12 classroom teachers so that state resources can be used for VPK classrooms and supports.
- School Board of Manatee County's request of a onetime appropriation to expand and enhance the first Guy Harvey Academy of Arts & Science Program in the Nation.

THE VOICE OF BUSINESS

The Manatee Chamber of Commerce has been the voice of Manatee businesses for more than 130 years. Since 1889, we have advocated to strengthen business development and expansion, enhance workforce development opportunities, improve natural resources, expand access to quality early learning and post-secondary attainment, broaden access to health care, and invest in area transportation infrastructure. With the support and investment of our 2,000+ business members, employing a workforce of more than 70,000, we work to grow our economy and support the business community.

Higher Ed

- Funding local higher education initiatives that increase student access, provide skill training to residents displaced from the workforce, and meet critical employment needs.
- Measures to increase the talent pipeline of local teachers in Florida's K-12 schools.
- Bonding of Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds for workforce education projects and to address critically deferred maintenance.
- Fixed capital outlay expansion and renovation projects at local higher education institutions and adding the flexibility to utilize unspent funds.

Workforce

- Policy measures that expand participating in pre-apprenticeship programs with industry stakeholders.
- Legislation and investments in workforce education programs for performance-based industry certifications and employment in high demand fields including STEM related careers.

Health & Workforce Wellness

- Continued measures to encourage additional medical residency slots, including the Psychiatry specialty, to attract more physicians to Florida, create jobs, and slow our rate of exporting Florida-educated physicians to other states.
- Florida-based solutions to capitalize on federal dollars available to decrease insurance costs, increase coverage and improve access for Florida's uninsured residents.
- Incentivizing employers to offer wellness and prevention resources to their employees.
- Allocating all opioid-related Florida Trust Funds for substance use prevention and treatment.
- Measures to expand access to behavioral health prevention and early intervention, treatment, and supportive services including funding to address the mental health crisis occurring at the VPK through high school levels.
- Measures that positively impact access to care and outcomes, including increased access to telehealth, innovative programs, pilot projects, and new technology.
- A state funding formula for Community Based Foster Care that equitably distributes state funding to support community-based care lead agencies that provide child welfare services in our community.

Natural Resources

- Allocation of funding for water resource projects including water quality improvement with a focus on reducing harmful algal blooms and alternative water supply development.
- Funding for beach renourishment projects
- Legislation that creates a more transparent regulatory process with increased accountability as well as reduced costs, unnecessary duplication and avoidable burdens on stakeholders.

Transportation & Infrastructure

- Cooperative funding with Manatee County for the replacement of the DeSoto Bridge and capacity improvements on the Fort Hamer Bridge.
- Consideration of all alternatives that will maximize north-south and east-west capacity throughout the County.
- Allocating all Transportation Trust Funds available to support transportation projects in the FDOT work program.
- Funding of the Anna Maria and Cortez Bridge projects including a 'bus-on-shoulder' lane for emergency vehicles and future transit alternatives.
- Funding and programs that increase broadband accessibility including encouraging private investment in the deployment of infrastructure including rural and underserved areas.
- Regional solution-based transit projects acknowledging Manatee County growth towards Hillsborough County.
- Legislation that authorizes a sustainable revenue stream, including collection of funding from diverse modes of transportation, including electric vehicles, for local and state governments to improve aging transportation infrastructure.



WE SUPPORT

Business Resiliency & Taxation

- Public policy action that defines the joint employer standard as “direct and immediate control” over workers’ terms and conditions of employment.
- Liability protections for businesses and employers from COVID related litigation.
- Expansion of the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC).

Education & Workforce Innovation

Workforce

- Reduction in the minimum instructional hours required for Pell eligibility to increase access to workforce training programs.

Health & Workforce Wellness

- Continued measures to encourage additional medical residency slots, including the Psychiatry specialty, to create a pipeline to solve the healthcare workforce shortage.
- Greater access, increased quality, and a reduction in overall per-patient cost, including options for small businesses and their employees to participate in association health plans.
- Measures to expand access to mental health and addiction prevention and treatment.
- Enforcement of existing parity laws to provide greater access to behavioral health care for individuals and families.
- Measures that positively impact affordability of and access to care and drive quality health outcomes for all, including medical research, innovative programs, and pilot projects.
- Programs, including the Section 804 Importation Program, to reduce the cost of prescription drugs.

Natural Resources

- Measures related to improving water quality.
- Allocation of grant funding to businesses for red tide recovery.
- Continued federal funding, in conjunction with Port Manatee’s dredged material management facility improvements, to provide and transport dredged material to be beneficially used for Washington Park Palmetto Restoration.
- A 125-mile buffer along the Florida coast banning offshore gas or oil drilling.
- Funding to assist local governments in repairs and improvements to existing passes that provide access to the open water for both the public and the Coast Guard.

Transportation & Infrastructure

- Federal funding for continued operation and maintenance of the SeaPort Manatee Harbor entrance channel including adequate dredged material disposal capacity at SeaPort Manatee.
- Funding for coastal resiliency needs, including the analysis of surface and sub-surface infrastructure.
- Measures that increase broadband accessibility; encourage private investment in the deployment of infrastructure including rural and underserved areas.