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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indiana Chamber Reveals Top Legislative Priorities for 2024 Session

On List: Enhancing Childcare, Career Readiness and XBE Certifications

November 20, 2023 (INDIANAPOLIS) — The [Indiana Chamber of Commerce](https://www.indianachamber.com) unveiled its upcoming priorities at the 2024 Indiana Legislative Preview today. A panel discussion featuring General Assembly caucus leaders from both parties headlined the event.

“Enhancing our talent pipeline remains a critical focus,” says Indiana Chamber President and CEO-elect Vanessa Green Sinderson. “We look forward to working with lawmakers, employers and learning institutions across the state to continue momentum on workforce development and keeping Hoosiers gainfully employed.”

Further strengthening career-connected learning expectations and opportunities for Indiana students and building on last year’s House Enrolled Act 1002 will be a point of emphasis, notes Jason Bearce, Indiana Chamber vice president of education and workforce development.

“Indiana has a talent and quality worker shortage that is leaving too many positions unfilled and negatively affects attempts to lure companies to relocate to the state,” he asserts.

Also needed by employers and the workforce: additional efforts to enhance early childcare access and quality.

“We made a start at addressing this issue last session, but everyone realizes more needs to be done. The lack of affordable, high-quality childcare across Indiana is impacting Hoosier families and businesses all over the state. It’s certainly one of the outside factors most negatively impacting attracting and retaining workers,” Bearce shares.

Health – and health care – matters continue to resonate for the Indiana Chamber and its members as well. Among these is increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates to medical providers.

“Reimbursement rates are too low and that results in a shift to commercial payers making up for the losses providers incur on Medicaid patients,” offers Ashton Eller, Indiana Chamber vice president of health care policy and employment law.

While 2023 saw a great deal of investment toward mental and physical health challenges in the state, the Indiana Chamber once again is asking legislators to tackle the state’s smoking rate – the eighth highest in the nation – by increasing the cigarette tax by \$2 per pack.

The cigarette tax has not been raised since 2007, and Eller says “increasing it by \$2 per pack would reduce the number of smokers in Indiana by about 100,000 and generate over \$370 million in new revenue in the first year.”

That amount, he states, “would provide ample revenue to help fund increasing Medicaid obligations,” adding the tax increase would also “keep an estimated 24,500 youngsters from becoming adults who smoke or vape and help 50,000 adults quit smoking – and save nearly 20,000 lives.”

To spur economic development, the Indiana Chamber supports administrative and legislative changes at the state and local levels to minority, women and veteran business enterprise (XBE) policies and practices to make certification, recertification and bidding activities efficient.

Furthermore, the organization’s push for driving privilege cards for undocumented residents continues in 2024. Indiana Chamber Vice President of Economic Development and Technology Adam H. Berry explains the cards will improve public safety and increase the number of insured drivers.

“Undocumented residents of Indiana who hold driving cards will feel a greater sense of security and responsibility when driving and/or interacting with authorities,” he points out.

Tort reform to help businesses avoid frivolous lawsuits and increasing the threshold for business personal property tax exemption are also among the Chamber’s preferences to streamline rules to keep Indiana among the best states in the country to run a business.

The list of Indiana Chamber top legislative priorities and objectives for the upcoming session are as follows:

- Support tort reform to improve legal climate
- Support local recognition of state XBE certification for improved efficiency
- Support driving privilege cards for undocumented residents
- Support additional efforts to enhance early childcare access and quality
- Support further strengthening career-connected learning expectations and opportunities for Indiana students, building on last year’s House Enrolled Act 1002
- Support revised Indiana Code definition of PFAS/PFOA, a type of chemical used in various industries
- Support increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates to medical providers
- Support cigarette tax increase of \$2 per pack
- Support expanding the scope-of-practice for low-level providers that would increase access to care
- Support banning union-only project labor agreements
- Support increasing the threshold for business personal property exemption

A detailed rundown of the Indiana Chamber’s 2024 key legislative initiatives is available at www.indianachamber.com/priorities.

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The Indiana Chamber partners with 25,000 members and investors to achieve the mission of “cultivating a world-class environment which provides economic opportunity and prosperity.