

COMMERCE LEXINGTON

# 2026 State Legislative Priorities



● commerce  
● ● lexington®

# ADVOCATING FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Business leaders often focus on attracting investments and creating jobs, leaving limited time to monitor legislation, analyze its impacts, and advocate for changes. That's why Commerce Lexington and its Public Policy Council gather the top experts in a variety of industries, harness that knowledge, and advocate for the interests of business in Washington, Frankfort, and with our local governments to create a more business-friendly environment.

Each year, we collaborate with our member investors to identify key issues affecting the business community and promote the best policy solutions. Our strong relationships with local, state, and federal officials ensure your voice is amplified on behalf of our more than 1,900 members.

This Policy Statements document summarizes the issues we will advocate for in the coming year. Detailed information is available on our website via the QR code on this page. Please contact us with questions or if a state issue affects your business.

**SCAN QR CODE TO VIEW  
FULL 2026 COMMERCE  
LEXINGTON POLICY  
STATEMENTS ON-LINE:**



## COMMERCE LEXINGTON PUBLIC POLICY DIVISION

The Public Policy Council drives Commerce Lexington's advocacy initiatives. The council members and chair are all volunteers and represent a variety of large and small businesses, local government, nonprofit organizations, education groups and utilities comprising a broad spectrum of Commerce Lexington's member companies. The Council's chairperson is appointed annually by the Chair of the Board of Commerce Lexington.

### What We Do:

- Actively monitor legislative and regulatory activity from the Urban County Government, Kentucky General Assembly and the U.S. House and Senate related to priority issues.
- Advocate for priority issues on behalf of the Lexington business community at the local, state and federal level.
- Help members navigate government agencies and address issues impacting their business.
- Manage the Public Policy Council, a committee of volunteer members representing a cross section of membership. The Council develops the Policy Statements and guides the Commerce Lexington's position on key issues that impact economic growth.
- Participate in legislative and legal coalitions, submitting letters, filing briefs, and testifying on behalf of business at committee meetings.
- Provide communications to the business community during the Legislative Session and throughout the year about policy issues including bills or ordinances with impacts on business and the local economy.
- Create numerous educational and networking opportunities throughout the year from members to interact with local, state and federal officials or policy leaders.

# COMMERCE LEXINGTON PUBLIC POLICY COUNCIL:

**Dennis Anderson**

Anderson Communities

**Kevin Atkins**

City of Lexington

**Bob Babbage**

Babbage CoFounder

**Lourdes Baez**

Baptist Health

**Marli Baumann**

Baumann Paper Company

**Stephanie Bell**

Kinetic

**Carla Blanton**

Carla Blanton Consulting

**Tracy Bruno**

Fayette County Public Schools

**Tyler Burke**

Columbia Gas of Kentucky

**Steve Byars**

Moneywatch Advisors

**Sherri Craig**

CHI Saint Joseph Health

**Ray Daniels**

Transylvania University

**Heather Dieffenbach**

Lexington Public Library

**Greg Dixon**

SMART Recycling Management

**Rob Edwards**

University of Kentucky

**Jennifer Fraker**

University of Kentucky

**Eric Frankl**

Blue Grass Airport

**Gina Greathouse**

Commerce Lexington

**Branden Gross**

**Policy Council Chair**

Dentons

**Jay Ingle**

Jackson Kelly PLLC

**Todd Johnson**

Building Industry Association of  
Central Kentucky

**Patrick Keal**

LG&E & KU Energy

**Gracie Kelly**

Kentucky League of Cities

**Susan Lancho**

Kentucky American Water

**Eric Landis**

East Kentucky Power Cooperative

**Clay Larkin**

Dentons

**Amanda Lich**

AT&T

**Josh McCurn**

Haymaker Company

**Allen McDaniel**

Downtown Lexington Partnership

**Sam McKown**

Kentucky Coal Association

**Hope McLaughlin**

Elevance Health/Anthem

**Chauncey Morris**

Kentucky Thoroughbred Association

**T.J. Morrison**

Goodwill

**Darryl Neher**

Lexington Habitat for Humanity

**Nick Nicholson**

Stoll Keenon Ogden LLC

**Matt Niehaus**

Professional Insurance Agents of  
Kentucky

**Chris Nolan**

MML&K Government Solutions

**Sara Osborne**

MML&K Government Solutions

**Stewart Perry**

Perry & Perry/State Farm Insurance

**Bob Quick**

Commerce Lexington

**Mary Quinn Ramer**

VisitLEX

**Robert Riggs**

Riggs Sales Service, Inc.

**Julie Schmidt**

Kentucky Education Television

**Kate Shanks**

Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

**Hollie Spade**

AT&T

**Thomas B. Stephens**

Kentucky Association of Health Plans

**Hunter Stout**

Keeneland Association

**Erin Tipton**

Bluegrass Community Technical College

**George Wallace**

WesBanco Bank

**Ethan Witt**

Cornerstone Government Affairs



# Public Policy Top Investors

We're proud to recognize our Public Policy Top Investors, who provide critical resources that allow Commerce Lexington to actively engage policymakers, shape pro-business policy priorities, and monitor key legislative issues at the local, state, and federal levels. Their investment helps ensure that the collective voice of more than 1,900 businesses is heard on issues that directly affect economic growth, job creation, and the overall business climate throughout the Greater Lexington Region. To become a Policy Partner or Champion, contact Lisa Mahan at [lmahan@commercelexington.com](mailto:lmahan@commercelexington.com).

## ADVOCACY EFFORTS POWERED BY:



## PUBLIC POLICY PARTNERS:



## PUBLIC POLICY CHAMPIONS:



# KEY POLICY EVENTS & INITIATIVES



Policy Luncheon Photo by Shelly Dawn Images

## PUBLIC POLICY LUNCHEON SERIES:

Held four times annually, this event series is a unique opportunity for members and guests to network over lunch and hear from leading state and national officials about current events and critical issues confronting our region, state, and country. The 2025 Policy Luncheon Series featured Congressman Andy Barr, U.S. Senator Rand Paul, Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell, and Kentucky Senate President Robert Stivers and House Speaker David Osborne (**pictured above**). Sponsorships and attendance provide a great opportunity to demonstrate your interest in policy advocacy and public discussion of important issues.

## WASHINGTON, D.C. FLY-IN:

The Greater Lexington Region's Annual DC Fly-In is comprised of Central Kentucky's leaders from the business community, non-profit sector, post-secondary institutions and local elected officials who travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with Kentucky's federal Congressional delegation to advocate on behalf of the region's federal legislative agenda. In addition to meeting with Kentucky's federal delegation, the D.C. Fly-In affords participants the opportunity to hear from various leaders and policy experts on Capitol Hill over a three-day period.

2025 Washington, D.C. Fly-In



# KEY POLICY EVENTS & INITIATIVES



Regional Summit Photo by Mahan Multimedia

## REGIONAL SUMMIT / REGIONAL PLAN:

Commerce Lexington fully supports the implementation of the Regional Competitiveness Plan to improve the region's competitiveness for jobs and talent. The action initiatives include leadership engagement, developing a regional branding and marketing campaign, enhancing site selector awareness of the region and its assets, recruiting talent through a talent marketing campaign, retaining talent through an internship project, increasing state and federal funding for site development and other infrastructure needs, and advocating for changes to local and state tax and regulatory policies. Regions that work together effectively toward common goals are better positioned to successfully navigate the challenges of the future. A record crowd of 325-plus people attended the Regional Summit in November to hear from national economic development experts and participate in breakout sessions focused on the key action items in the plan.

## GREATER LEXINGTON DAY AT THE CAPITOL:

The focus of Greater Lexington Day at the Capitol is to provide an opportunity for advocacy, relationship building, and issue education in Frankfort during the General Assembly's Legislative Session. During the event, business and community leaders from Central Kentucky, local and state elected officials, local chambers and economic development groups come together to hear about state policy issues of importance to the region.



# 2026 State Legislative Priorities

## PRO-GROWTH TAX REFORM

In 2025, Kentucky achieved significant progress by reducing the individual income tax rate from 4.0% to 3.5% effective January 2026. Commerce Lexington supports continued phased reductions in this rate, along with further simplification of the tax code, to ease compliance burdens and enhance economic competitiveness.



## HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY & AFFORDABILITY



**Lexington needs more than 20,000 units** to meet current housing needs and to support the region's workforce. Rapidly rising home prices and low inventory and regulatory and infrastructure challenges are pricing out families, essential workers, and first-time buyers. This session, Commerce Lexington supports creating a \$20 million statewide bank capital fund and tax credit program to support increasing affordable housing. We also support proposals that allow for more tools for developers and local governments to utilize to increase housing such as housing development districts with infrastructure financing options or innovative tax incentive options, as well as continued regulatory reforms to help streamline processes and lower costs for builders or buyers.

# 2026 State Legislative Priorities

## LEXINGTON'S TRANSFORMATIONAL HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PARTNERSHIP



Commerce Lexington praises the \$10 million state appropriation from the General Assembly in 2024 on the former Transylvania University baseball site to expedite site readiness and accelerate meeting Lexington's affordable housing needs. The \$10 million investment leverages \$64 million in total investment including \$3 million initial land purchase capital provided by local banks through a revolving loan fund. This project is creating both homeownership and rental opportunities through collaborative efforts of banks, developers, and government.



# 2026 State Legislative Priorities

## TALENT ATTRACTION & RETENTION

States and regions nationwide are intensifying talent attraction efforts through targeted marketing to highlight lifestyle, career opportunities, and to support economic growth. Kentucky aims to join this competition with a unified statewide campaign that boasts local initiatives like Greater LEX. Commerce Lexington supports the proposed three-year, \$5 million statewide marketing plan to position Kentucky as a premier place to live and work, targeting in-state retention and out-of-state talent from similar industry clusters.



## CHILDCARE:

Commerce Lexington supports prioritizing investments to help create more affordable, high-quality childcare options that improve early education and parental workforce participation. Expanding access could add 16,000–28,000 working parents in Kentucky and generate \$600 million – \$1.1 billion in annual economic impact. Working with the Kentucky Chamber’s Childcare Collaborative, we support next



steps such as supports closing childcare data gaps, sustaining the Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership, streamlining regulations to increase facilities, boosting local business/community engagement to provide more locally driven solutions, reforming Kentucky All STARS, and promoting a mixed public-private delivery model to increase access and affordability statewide.

# 2026 State Legislative Priorities

## WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

Commerce Lexington supports continued investment and alignment to strengthen and align workforce development programs, K-12 education and postsecondary pathways to support the needs of regional employers.

We support investments in the **University of Kentucky's** priorities including asset preservation projects to maintain and modernize essential campus buildings and infrastructure — and support of the construction of a state-of-the-art research facility to foster innovative, interdisciplinary research throughout campus (including more than 70 centers and institutes). This new research facility will unite expertise across science, engineering and computational fields to advance chronic disease research and deliver innovative solutions to improve the health of Kentuckians. Commerce Lexington supports UK's need for authorization for a new arts district following a significant gift from the Bill Gatton Foundation.



We support **Bluegrass Community Technical College System** in their efforts to support regional business development, enhance technical skills training, provide “work ready” employees, and create a seamless pathway to a bachelor’s degree. Specific advocacy support includes increasing funding for the Work Ready Kentucky scholarships, dual credit scholarships, KCTCS TRAINS, and the post-secondary performance-based funding model.

A strong public school system is essential to a thriving workforce and community. Commerce Lexington supports maintaining state funding that enables **Fayette County Public Schools** (FCPS) to develop the talent needed for successful business recruitment and retention such as investments in school safety, full-day Kindergarten, broader preschool access, and SEEK based funding. We aim to ensure Fayette County students and educators have the resources necessary to succeed while restoring long-term budget stability through cost savings, efficiencies, new public-private revenue opportunities, and better alignment of resources. We urge FCPS leaders to maintain clear, consistent communication on the financial stability plan and to strengthen financial management practices, internal controls, oversight, transparency, and board governance — and to share these improvements with the community.

# 2026 State Legislative Priorities

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Commerce Lexington strongly supports sustained investment in the Kentucky Product Development Initiative (KPDI). This program has helped accelerate local and state investments in critical infrastructure to support site readiness. To date, more than 16 KPDI grants have been announced across the region, resulting in 764 jobs and \$154 million in capital investment. These improvements are promoting high-wage job creation, attracting and retaining long-term capital investment, and supporting business expansion and attraction efforts.

## CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE:

Commerce Lexington supports sustained investment in critical transportation infrastructure such as roads, bridges, airports, and railroads to continue to improve economic connectivity in growth areas. We also support state investment in critical utilities for economic development such as water, sewer, energy and broadband, and policy reforms that strengthen critical infrastructure, provide reliable service and increase affordability.



## INVESTMENT IN TRANSFORMATIONAL PROJECTS:

With the 2026 Legislative Session focused on crafting the state's next biennial budget, Commerce Lexington is collaborating with local government and business leaders to identify the region's priority investments to position the region as a premier place to live, work, and visit. We support public and private investment in transformational projects with significant economic impact for the region such as the Bluegrass Airport Terminal Expansion, a new Lexington Children's Museum, a new performing arts center, and investments in regional business parks to increase shovel ready land for jobs and infrastructure to expediate housing construction in Lexington's Expansion Area 3 (Athens Boonesboro Road corridor).

## COMMERCE LEXINGTON POLICY TEAM:



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