

BARRY COUNTY CHAMBER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

CURRENT AND FUTURE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

ADVANCE BUSINESS. FACILITATE SOLUTIONS. STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES.



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MISSION-DRIVEN AND MEMBER-FOCUSED

PUBLIC RELATIONS & ADVOCACY

Our goals are to:

- Increase awareness of legislation and policy changes that could impact development
- Advocate for potential pro-development programs & policies
- Increase the EDA's presence in appropriate and relevant state and regional organizations to enhance Barry County's influence and awareness.

The Barry County Chamber and Economic Development Alliance will not endorse individual candidates running for public office but will advocate for legislation that affects the Barry County business community based on the five elements of a vibrant economy:

1. A competitive business climate—A place to do business that is affordable, predictable, and provides incentives for growth. A place where small businesses are encouraged to start, thrive, and grow. A smart regulatory approach that balances the need for regulation and the need for private sector job growth.
2. A robust private sector environment that works in partnership with the public sector to spur innovation and produce collective problem-solving.
3. Strategic process for recruiting new employers to locate in Barry County and strengthening existing businesses.
4. Enhanced global-trade opportunities.
5. Up-to-date transportation, public services, and communications infrastructure.

SNAPSHOT:

Barry County, Michigan is comprised of 1,333 organizations representing 16,479 employees.

The total population is 63,598 with a labor force of 30,309.

The unemployment rate is 4.24% as of February 15, 2023.

CREATING A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

BCCEDA will support both the Executive and Legislative branches of County and State Government in creating a vibrant economy.

Support adequate resources for the economic development efforts in the County including:

- Creating a strategy to attract new business sectors and direct investment in those businesses.
- Defining success in Economic Development through agreed upon federal data and metrics.
- Aggregating accurate data.
- Support legislation to lower the costs associated with doing business in Barry County and in Michigan.
- Support legislation to reduce the tax burden on businesses, particularly small and startup businesses.
- Support legislation creating strategic tax credit programs for high-tech, cutting edge, high-wage, and other industries which the State is looking to attract.
- Support initiatives geared towards attracting and training the next generation of the workforce to Barry County.
- Oppose legislation that will constrict private sector growth and development.

A survey of the Barry County Chamber and Economic Development Alliance members was conducted in March of 2023. Members were asked what issues matter the most to them. The results of that survey determined which areas we will place the most emphasis on in the near future.

The top 5 issues affecting Barry County businesses (in this order) are:

1. Talent attraction / retention (workforce readiness)
2. Infrastructure (including housing and transportation)
3. Broadband Expansion
4. Environment
5. Childcare

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

1. Talent Attraction:

- Support workforce development efforts to maintain and enhance the pipeline of highly trained, skilled workers in Barry County by supporting education programs and facilities in the County, including aligning K-12, higher education, and industry needs to bolster these efforts.
- Continue to promote and advocate for high-impact programs such as apprenticeships, career and technical education, and early college high schools that connect students with post-secondary and career opportunities.
- Support policies that improve college and/or training persistence and completion rates to provide an employable and adaptable workforce.
- Support policies to reduce regulatory barriers to employment to ensure the private sector can meet workforce needs.
- Support efforts to address current workforce housing access and affordability challenges to ensure communities across the state can attract and retain talent.
- Promote policies that increase awareness and access to higher education options for Barry County as well as the return on investment of a degree and certification programs based on anticipated income.
- We support ongoing efforts to improve Michigan's entire education system to deliver the essential talent skills our industries need.



2. Infrastructure—Housing / Transportation

- Support increased housing capacity throughout Barry County.
- Support legislation that boosts attainable, workforce housing in Barry County.
- Create and manage County Land Bank, ensuring mutual benefits between parties.
- Support increased capacity on M-37.
- Support a State-County partnership to fund infrastructure and roadways.
- Support trail system improvements.
- Support continued strategic efforts to increase public investment of local, state, and federal funding into Barry County’s transportation network which will result in economic growth and greater quality of life.
- Support development of Barry County’s public transportation systems, including trails, rideshares, and pay services.
- Support innovations in transportation technology, including the development and deployment of EV vehicle charging stations and infrastructure.

3. Broadband Expansion:

- Support initiatives aimed at significantly accelerating adoption of internet broadband access by customers, businesses, schools, and government enterprises.
- Support responsible efforts to expand broadband capabilities to increase the competitiveness of small and medium-sized manufacturers in rural areas.



4. Environment:

- Support rules and regulations that focus on clarity, consistency, and certainty in compliance standards to assure the most efficient use of environmental protection dollars while also protecting our economic competitiveness.
- Promote sustainability, upcycling, and recycling programs.
- Protect statewide access to sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy supplies.
- Support access to high-quality, affordable water supplies to ensure future water supply security for communities and businesses.
- Support and promote legislation that acts in favor of responsible corporate citizenship
- Support efforts to move building materials into more sustainable products i.e., green materials.

5. Childcare:

- Support spending that promotes training and incentives to increase the number of care givers.
- Support programs that promote child care education to college bound students.
- Work with local educational facilities to expand curriculum to include credited courses in child development and/or care.
- Support policies that promote growth in the child care industry. Assist with regulatory reform that hinders entrepreneurial startups.
- Support and promote use of the Tri-share program to address the daycare needs employees face.



Additional Areas of Focus:

A Competitive Business Climate:

- Support current tax incentives and economic development policies that have proven to attract investment and create jobs in the state.
- Promote tax policies that incentivize growth and provide economic stability to Barry County industries.
- Oppose repeal of Michigan's Right To Work law, which provides employees the freedom to choose whether to join and financially support unions.
- Support policies to assist in privately funded technological infrastructure advancements in rural communities aiding small businesses, colleges, hospitals, and local governments.
- Preserve employers' ability to maintain a safe business environment for employees.
- Support efforts to increase regulatory predictability and certainty for job creators related to environmental, social, and governance criteria. Businesses need to know what the rules are and must have the autonomy to make decisions that are in their employees' and customers' best interest.

Health and Well-being:

- Support policies that promote the development of a talented and qualified workforce across the healthcare continuum.
- Support initiatives that align with the Blue Zones mission in promoting healthier communities.
- Encourage policies that allow employers and health insurers the flexibility to design plans that work for businesses and employees.

Land Use:

- Support implementation of the Hastings Master Plan, the Nashville Master Plan, the Middleville Master Plan, the Comprehensive Community Strategy, and the Barry County Master Plan.

Cyber Security:

- Support policies that encourage more robust cybersecurity practices and procedures.