

**BCW**  
BCM

**BUSINESS  
COUNCIL OF  
WESTCHESTER**

Build. Connect. Win.

## 2022 Legislative Agenda

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Board

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President/CEO

**George Lence**  
Vice Chair  
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Action

**John Ravitz**  
Executive Vice  
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**Andra Horsch**  
Vice President of  
State Government  
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Kamala D. Harris, *Vice President*

**United States Senate**

Charles E. Schumer, *Majority Leader*  
Kirsten Gillibrand

**United States House of Representatives**

16th C.D. Jamaal Bowman  
17th C.D. Mondaire Jones  
18th C.D. Sean Patrick Maloney

**New York State Public Officials**

Kathy Hochul, *Governor*  
Brian Benjamin, *Lt Governor*  
Thomas DiNapoli, *Comptroller*  
Letitia James, *Attorney General*

**State Senate**

34th S.D. Alessandra Biaggi  
35th S.D. Andrea Stewart-Cousins,  
*Majority Leader*  
36th S.D. Jamaal Bailey  
37th S.D. Shelley Mayer  
38th S.D. Elijah Reichlin-Melnick  
40th S.D. Peter Harckham

**State Assembly**

88th A.D. Amy Paulin  
89th A.D. J. Gary Pretlow  
90th A.D. Nader J. Sayegh  
91st A.D. Steve Otis  
92nd A.D. Thomas J. Abinanti  
93rd A.D. Chris Burdick  
94th A.D. Kevin Byrne  
95th A.D. Sandra R. Galef

**Westchester County Public Officials**

George Latimer, *County Executive*  
Timothy Idoni, *County Clerk*  
Mimi Rocah, *District Attorney*

**Board of Legislators**

1st District Colin Smith  
2nd District Erika Pierce  
3rd District Margaret A. Cunzio  
4th District Vedat Gashi  
5th District Benjamin Boykin  
6th District Nancy E. Barr, *Vice Chairwoman*  
7th District Catherine Parker  
8th District Jewel Williams Johnson  
9th District Catherine Borgia, *Chairwoman*  
10th District Damon R. Maher  
11th District Terry Clements  
12th District Mary Jane Shimsky  
13th District Tyrae Woodson-Samuels  
14th District David J. Tubiolo  
15th District James Nolan  
16th District Christopher A. Johnson  
17th District Jose Alvarado

**Mayors**

Shawyn Patterson-Howard, *Mt. Vernon*  
Noam Bramson, *New Rochelle*  
Vivian McKenzie, *Peekskill*  
Thomas Roach, *White Plains*  
Mike Spano, *Yonkers*



# 2022 OVERVIEW

**T**he Business Council of Westchester (BCW) is the county’s largest and most prestigious business membership organization representing more than 1,000 members, including multinational corporations, hospitals, universities, biotech pioneers, not-for profits, entrepreneurs and companies of all sizes. As the county’s only business membership organization focusing on advocacy and economic development, the BCW’s members enjoy unparalleled access to today’s top thought leaders, diverse business development opportunities and lawmakers at all levels of government.

The BCW’s members represent over 200,000 employees in Westchester County and beyond. Most importantly, the members continue to help drive the county’s economy in creating economic growth and jobs. **The BCW is proud of its open, inclusive and collaborative culture**, which is fostered through the involvement of its members and the strong leadership and dedication



of its Board of Directors. Many of the BCW’s members conduct business on a regional, statewide, national and international level, which has served to create opportunities for business growth in Westchester and throughout the Hudson Valley.

The BCW is a private not-for-profit corporation funded by annual investments by its members.

*BCW President & CEO Marsha Gordon welcomes Governor Kathy Hochul to Westchester.*

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# GOVERNMENT ACTION COUNCIL

## Improved Business Climate

The mission of the BCW's Government Action Council is to provide leadership in public policy and involve our members in helping to advocate for economic opportunity in Westchester County and the Hudson Valley.

To accomplish this, the BCW's Government Action Council will:

- ✦ Educate and inform the business community about relevant county, state and federal policy issues.
- ✦ Review county, state and federal legislation and regulations to assess potential impacts on the business community.
- ✦ Influence public policy outcomes through advocacy when the business community's interest may be affected.
- ✦ Serve as a resource for information and clearinghouse for the business community and governmental leaders.
- ✦ Leverage public policy issues and legislation to promote business growth and create a more competitive business environment.
- ✦ Look beyond the borders of Westchester County and the Hudson Valley to address issues impacting the business community statewide.

## The important role of the BCW's Legislative Agenda

Every year, legislative bills that are passed or not passed in local, state and federal legislatures have a powerful impact on the Westchester business community's ability to serve its stakeholders. Business leaders, whether they represent large, medium or small sized communities owe it to themselves, their employees and their shareholders (if they work for a publicly

traded company), to offer their opinion and expertise on important policy issues.

In order to address this critical responsibility, the BCW's Government Action Council creates a Legislative Agenda each year. All BCW members are encouraged to contribute their suggestions and expertise in this process. The BCW also works with local, state and federal elected officials to convert legislative goals into reality.



Included in this overall effort is the BCW's annual Albany Lobby Day, that is held during the state's legislative session. The Government Action Council also meets on a regular basis with local, state and federal elected officials and agency representatives to ensure that positions on legislation and regulatory matters are addressed in a timely manner. Every year the work of the BCW's Legislative Agenda promotes pro-business recommendations that help Westchester and the Hudson Valley's economy. Every Westchester County elected official will receive a copy of the BCW's 2022 Legislative Agenda.

## Current challenges and priorities

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, government at all levels continue to face critical challenges. The BCW will continue to be a strong voice for the Westchester business community, which faces serious day-to-day issues as it re-emerges from this difficult time. **The BCW will urge our elected officials to adopt sound policies that lead to sustainable economic growth** that will, in turn, create much-needed jobs in all business sectors. The BCW looks forward to continuing meaningful discussions with our county, state and federal elected officials on the many issues presented in this Legislative Agenda to ensure that the collective voice of the county's business community is heard.

BCW Executive Vice President John Ravitz leads a Government Action Council meeting.

# COUNTY

## Remaining fiscally responsible as Westchester re-emerges from the pandemic

Westchester County is certainly not alone in facing its most serious fiscal challenges in modern history. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted revenue flows on all levels and is creating uncertainties that defy quick and easy solutions. In 2022, the BCW looks forward to continuing to work with Westchester County Executive George Latimer as he begins his second term and with the members of the County Board of Legislators to continue to promote economic development in Westchester County. In December 2021, the Board of Legislators voted and approved the county's 2022 Executive Budget. The BCW appreciates the county's commitment to fiscal restraint as the county continues to recover from the pandemic downturn. The BCW applauds the county executive for cutting the property tax levy by \$7 million in this year's budget. This is the third year in a row that the county executive has cut the tax levy, an essential measure in helping our residents and business owners survive the crisis of the past two years. Another longtime BCW goal is improving Westchester County's credit rating. Fitch Ratings recently changed the negative outlook to **"stable"** on the county's general obligation bonds, while citing the county's ability to close budget gaps. This designation of a stable rating sends a strong message to the business community that Westchester County's fiscal house is in order. The BCW will also advocate against any new unnecessary regulations and fees that will cause businesses additional hardships. Now, more than ever, the economic health of Westchester County is dependent upon our county government making the right decisions to ensure fiscal responsibility for the future.

It is also essential that Westchester's municipal governments do all they can to assist businesses that have been severely hurt by the pandemic. In the early months of the pandemic, it was commendable to see local governments act quickly to eliminate or streamline applications and licenses processes so that restaurants and other businesses could erect outdoor spaces to serve their customers. That type of swift **"outside of the box thinking"** leadership must continue in 2022. The BCW supports the good efforts that many of the county's cities and towns have implemented over the past few months. One example that the BCW supported is Yorktown's new Overlay Zoning District. The BCW encourages other county municipalities to look to adopt similar programs that will offer a practical,



manageable, and viable approach to revitalize its business hamlets while preserving the character and scale of their communities. To this end, local governments must continue to engage their citizens to be active positive participants in this process that will only help Westchester's businesses move forward.

In 2021, the BCW held numerous "roundtable" discussions with members of the Board of Legislators to discuss concerns about specific pieces of legislation that the Board was proposing to adopt. During these sessions, business owners of all sizes gave concrete examples on what the negative impact would be if certain legislative initiatives were adopted. It is critical that county legislative leaders understand that passing legislation that has unintended consequences could serve as a barrier for future employers creating more jobs in Westchester County.

**In 2022, the BCW will again remind county government that Westchester prides itself on having a strong vibrant workforce.** Our employers are committed to their employees and passing legislation that becomes **direct mandates** and causes unintended consequences to businesses sends a message to employers, that in Westchester County, government will determine how they manage their workforce. Creating that type of environment as the county re-emerges from the pandemic will not bring more permanent jobs to Westchester.

In 2022, the BCW will also continue helping to make the county's "Element 46" program a success. The program was designed to help startup businesses succeed by providing them with free workspace, training, mentoring and access to pro bono consulting services. This program and other likeminded programs will be critical to help the county encourage entrepreneurs to create businesses that will be part of the county's permanent workforce.



ABOVE: BCW Executive Vice President John Ravitz, BCW Board Chair Heidi Davidson and BCW President & CEO Marsha Gordon join County Executive George Latimer at the BCW's 2021 Annual Dinner.

RIGHT: 2021 BCW Hall of Fame winners.



**The BCW’S WIN program**

In 2022, the BCW initiated the Westchester Innovation Network (WIN). WIN is a multifaceted program designed to create an environment within Westchester County that brings innovative products and services together with existing organizations to test and learn about emerging technologies and innovations in a variety of industries.

The goal of WIN is to introduce innovation in Westchester County from anywhere in the world and pair those innovators with businesses in our community. The program is an exciting, no-cost opportunity for Westchester businesses to beta test, gather data and educate prospective customers about innovation happening in their industries. To learn more about the WIN program please contact the BCW at [win@thebcw.org](mailto:win@thebcw.org).

The BCW also urges the County Executive and the Board of Legislators to promote and adopt smart private-public partnerships that will create solid opportunities for real economic growth. These partnerships can only help the county generate more needed revenue and encourage experienced private companies to become active in Westchester County. The BCW has always supported a public-private partnership proposal for Westchester County’s Airport and Rye Playland. Both facilities are important economic development tools to recruit and retain jobs in the county. The BCW was

pleased that the County and Standards Amusements have reached a settlement over the management of the Playland amusement park. **Westchester County needs to continue to look for private sector partners who have proven track records in working with municipalities to improve and enhance key county-owned properties.** Other states around the country have shown that public-private partnerships have worked, not only to successfully enhance existing properties and projects, but to create more private sector jobs as well.

**The BCW’S economic recovery task force**



When the pandemic economic downturn hit, it became clear to the BCW that a successful recovery would require a coordinated response by business leaders from the private and public sectors. The BCW quickly formed the Westchester Economic Recovery Task Force to help develop recommendations and identify issues and concerns that needed to be addressed by the state and county governments for the county’s resurgence.

The Task Force issued two reports to former Governor Cuomo and County Executive Latimer with issues and recommendations that had arisen as the economic downturn continued. Both reports can be found on the BCW’s website at [www.thebcw.org](http://www.thebcw.org).

In August of 2021, the Task Force co-sponsored a virtual Town Hall meeting with the county executive’s office to elicit ideas from our members on how the county should utilize the \$188 million in federal funding it will receive over the next two years from the American Rescue Plan. The BCW is pleased that many of the important recommendations that were brought up at the meeting were included in the county’s 2022 Executive Budget.

*NYS Attorney General Letitia James meets with BCW’s Board of Directors to discuss economic development issues.*

**The Task Force will continue its work in 2022 and serve as a constant point of contact between Westchester County’s diverse public and private business community and our political leaders at all levels of government.**

**The BCW’S coalition for Westchester Airport**

In 2022, the BCW ‘s Coalition for Westchester Airport will advocate for additional and necessary enhancements to make the airport more attractive so that it can continue to play an important role in creating more economic development opportunities for the county. The Coalition will remind our political leaders of the following important facts:

- + The airport is a key element in the county’s transportation infrastructure.
- + The airport is one of the county’s most valuable economic assets.
- + The airport is essential to attract and retain businesses in Westchester.
- + The airport employs thousands of people in diverse industries.
- + The airport is a tool for workforce development and training.



✦ The airport helps maintain a healthy tax climate.

Over 120 businesses have joined the BCW's Coalition for Westchester Airport as it continues to advocate for a new partnership between the county and an operator with a proven track record who will improve essential services and address important environmental and quality of life issues that the business community, the traveling community and the neighboring community are contending with. **The Coalition will continue to stay laser-focused in 2022 on finding solutions that will help enhance, and not expand, the airport.**

### **The BCW'S WestchesterWorks program**

In 2022, the BCW will be partnering to launch WestchesterWorks a social-justice program designed to recruit and offer free advanced training to local residents in underrepresented communities to enable them to qualify for skilled jobs in the construction trades in Westchester County. A focus on accountability sets this public-private inclusion initiative apart because program staff will actively monitor the apprentices' attendance, performance and needs to ensure program success.

To address longtime, local concerns about diversity and the lack of employment opportunities in the construction trades for members of marginalized communities, the BCW's Coalition for Smart Development helped establish WestchesterWorks, a proactive approach to opening career paths. The effort is a collaboration among the BCW's real estate development sector, Southern Westchester BOCES and Westhab, which will leverage its considerable community network to identify apprentices.

This program is a landmark investment that major real estate development leaders in Westchester are making to address the local hiring issue by providing a **no-cost avenue** for young adults who are not pursuing college. Apprenticeships greatly enhance skills and establish professional relationships to begin and grow in careers in construction. The structure of this program is modeled after the New York State Department of Labor's (DOL) apprenticeship programs and WestchesterWorks will be seeking DOL certification.



### **Workforce Development**

Due to the pandemic, the BCW recognizes that having the appropriate talent to fill available jobs in Westchester is more important than ever to assist the county's economy recovery. Over the past two years, many Westchester residents have unfortunately lost their jobs and will be looking for new opportunities to rejoin the workforce. As a member of the county's Workforce Investment Board, **the BCW will continue to advocate for funding on the federal, state and county levels for workforce training programs to meet the job needs of our key employers**, especially in health care, life sciences, hospitality and IT. The BCW has a special long-standing commitment to employment opportunities for young people that will continue through partnerships with youth organizations and not-for-profits, especially those serving youth in our urban centers. Additionally, our partnerships with Westchester institutions of higher learning will continue to provide the groundwork for building the workforce of the future.

### **Anti-racism, diversity and inclusion**

The BCW is committed to standing against racism and recognizes that diversity, inclusion, equality, and equity are fundamental growth drivers across all business and organizations. Over the last two years the BCW has joined forces with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of New York State to create a call to action to make a difference in communities across the nation with the shared goal of advancing the conversation to end racism with actionable steps to support real change. To achieve this goal, the BCW created an Anti-Racism Board Task Force and implemented a multifaceted



*BCW President & CEO Marsha Gordon interviews Harry Moseley, CIO of Zoom Video Communications, at the People's United Bank Speaker Series.*

program that includes listening, actions, resources and programming. A key part of this includes on-going opportunities to raise awareness among its members.

The BCW hosted a series of webinars that featured a diverse group of speakers who discussed how all employers could develop plans and guidelines to diversify their workforce and teach employees how to maintain an inclusive workforce that respects all customers and clients. Furthermore, to create a baseline benchmark of diversity and inclusion practices within its member organizations, the BCW issued an anonymous survey where aggregate data will be collected and used to get a better understanding of the BCW membership as it relates



Wilson Kimball, President of the Municipal Housing Authority for the City of Yonkers, Elizabeth Bracken-Thompson, Thompson-Bender, Jamie McGill, President of the Yonkers IDA, and Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano were guests at the BCW's 2021 Annual Dinner.

to diversity. The BCW intends to share themes from this data at future diversity and inclusion events, and to update it periodically.

To provide additional support and resources to its members, **the BCW launched an Anti-Racism Resource Center on its website that provides free programming for its members and their employees on a wide range of topics to foster inclusion.** In February of 2021, the BCW hosted a “Driving Diversity and Inclusion Conference” for businesses and organizations featuring speakers and experts covering best practices, resources and guidance on issues related to diversity and inclusion. The BCW’s goal is to continue to roll out resources that will support systemic change, and to play a role in this important dialogue and delivery of a robust plan of action. The BCW plans on holding another conference on this critical topic in 2022.

### **The BCW’s new partnership with the Green Business Bureau**

The BCW has long been committed to sustainable business, not only to help protect our environment, but as **a tool for our members to engage employees, save money through operational efficiency, and gain viability for excellent corporate citizenship.** To that end, the BCW launched the first Green Business Program in 2009, in partnership with Westchester County and Green Team Sprit. The program, the first in the region, was a tremendous success. Under the leadership of Program Directors Dani Glaser, Scott Fernquist and Jana Petrikova, the Green Business Challenge put many Westchester businesses on the path towards environmental sustainability. Within five years, the program expanded to offer certification: a rigorous process that integrated sustainable business practices into every aspect of company operations and used sophisticated tools to measure performance. The Green Business Partnership has helped more than 300 businesses become sustainable and the program worked with businesses and organizations throughout and beyond New York State and grew into a national model for best practices.

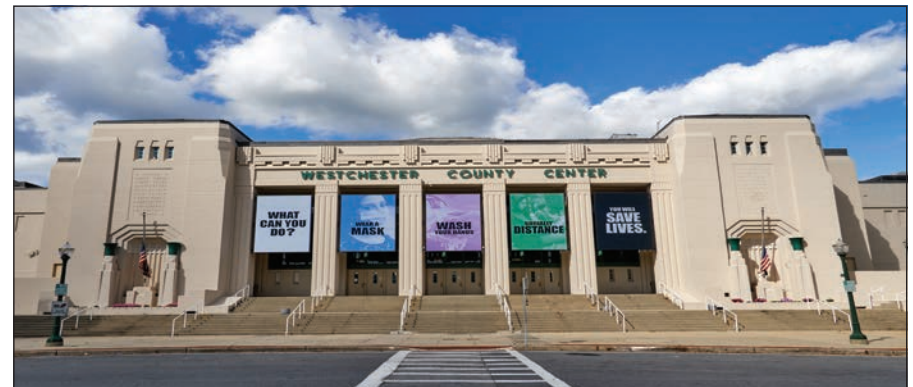


In 2022, the BCW is excited to announce a new partnership with the Green Business Bureau (GBB). The GBB is a national trusted authority in green business, offering levels of certification. The GBB’s online sustainability framework and customized tools enable businesses to understand, prioritize, and implement green initiatives and measure and validate results. The official GBB seal will help Westchester businesses credibly promote sustainability accomplishments. The BCW looks forward to continuing it’s sustainability commitment and welcomes the GBB to Westchester County. To learn more about the GBB program please go to **[www.thebcw.org](http://www.thebcw.org)**.

### **Parks**

Parks and open spaces are critical to the economic, environmental and social health of Westchester County. Quality parks and recreational facilities improve the economic climate and well-being of communities by attracting business and tourism. Studies have demonstrated that quality parks and recreational facilities are cited as one of the top three reasons that businesses use when deciding where to be located.

The iconic Westchester County Center will be 100 years old in 2030. It has served many purposes and millions of residents and visitors have visited it over the past decades. None greater perhaps than in its most recent history having been converted into an emergency hospital, a mass vaccination site and a testing site in the County’s effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. **It is a prime example of why investment in the county’s park infrastructure is vital to the health and well-being of our community.** The BCW supports efforts



to reimagine a new County Center for the next 100 years once its time as a critical healthcare facility is no longer needed. Going forward, business and individuals should participate in all public opportunities to voice their ideas about how this unique “park” should be restored and used so that over the next 100 years it continues to serve Westchester County and its residents.

The BCW is also proud to support the planned extension of the Westchester RiverWalk under the Mario M. Cuomo Bridge. The completed sections of the Westchester River Walk will add tremendous value to county residents’ quality of life. Especially during these last two year of the pandemic, RiverWalk has become more popular than ever. The BCW believes that extending the trail under the bridge will help create new jobs and boost the county’s economy. Connecting RiverWalk under the bridge will also help address traffic and parking concerns around the Tarrytown Station and create a connection up to the Bridge’s Shared Use Path in Rockland County, thereby creating access between important regional trails. The BCW applauds the County Executive and the Westchester County Board of Legislators for supporting this important project.

The BCW also supports the urgent need for “Green Infrastructure” as evidenced recently by Hurricane Ida. The county’s parks and open spaces not only serve as respites during fair weather, but they also serve as vital refuges during

extreme weather events, absorbing and mitigating storm effects. Without our county’s vast expanses of open green space, the storm damage would be immeasurably greater. The county must continue to build up their resiliency to help protect countless numbers of private homes and business.

Additionally, continued progress in reducing the backlog of parks capital projects remains a goal of the BCW. In addition to keeping parks as safe and affordable as they can be for the ever-increasing numbers of users, these projects inject important commercial activity into Westchester’s economy, creating jobs and millions of dollars in local spending. The business community and county parks are important allies. Without private investment, these vital green spaces cannot be preserved at a level that we all need them to be. The advocacy of our business leaders keeps the importance of parks front and center on the county’s agenda. We also recognize that non-tax investments in parks are vital to their preservation as one of the county’s greatest assets. Investing in Westchester County parks is good for the community and the people who live, work and play here and, in turn, they continue to demonstrate their great value to our businesses.



## STATE

As New York State enters the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state is re-emerging and moving forward. The business community is optimistic as vaccines and boosters have become readily available, as testing has expanded, as treatments have evolved and lockdowns have become a thing of the past. However, many challenges lie ahead and our state elected officials will need to make tough decisions as the state continues to re-emerge. The next variant may be right around the corner and New York State needs to be prepared so that its businesses can stay open and prosper.

One of the challenges will be deciding on how best to utilize the funds New York State will be receiving as part of the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act that were signed into law last year to speed up the Country’s recovery from the economic and health effects of the pandemic and ongoing recession. The Governor and the Legislature must prioritize programs and policies that will maintain New York State’s competitiveness and bring back and create new jobs as a means of bringing in more revenue to enhance the state’s economic climate.

Last year was unique given that the State Capitol was closed to lobbyists and visitors and no in-person meetings were held. Despite this, the BCW was actively engaged. Countless virtual meetings were held with leadership and members of both Houses, as well as with the Governor’s office. Additionally, dozens of Memorandums of Support and Opposition on bills of importance to the BCW business community were issued to the State Legislature.

In the year ahead, the BCW will continue to be proactive. While it’s still unclear whether or not the Capitol will reopen for in-person meetings, **the BCW will be diligent in monitoring the upcoming budget discussions and legislative session and seeing what the potential impacts may bring to the business community.** The BCW will also continue to remain in constant contact with the Governor, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and with the members of the Westchester delegation to ensure that the Westchester business community’s voices continue to be heard. The BCW has enjoyed a long and successful collaborative working relationship with Governor Kathy Hochul. We have full confidence in her abilities to lead the state and look forward to working with her and her administration. New York State still faces many economic challenges as we continue to rebound from the pandemic.







We stand ready to work closely with her as she continues to promote economic development, job creation and diversity initiatives in Westchester and across the state.

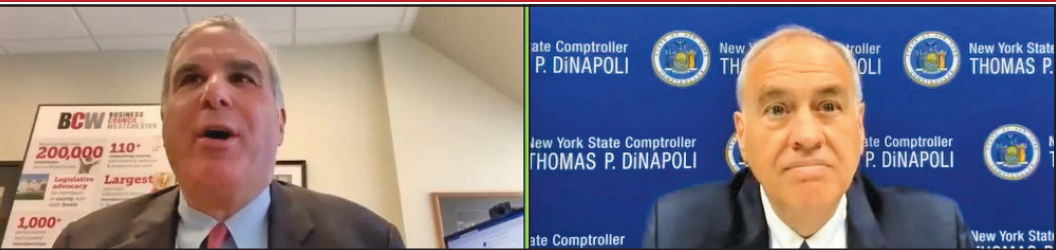
In 2022, the BCW urges the State Legislature to:

- + **Award** the downstate full gaming license that will allow Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts to achieve its potential as a full-scale commercial casino. Given the current economic realities facing our region and the state overall, we cannot afford to wait to begin the process of awarding the remaining licenses. **This is the BCW's top legislative priority for 2022** that would significantly speed up the state's recovery and bring much-needed jobs, investment and revenue into the region.
- + **Reject** Anti-Trust legislation (S.933A/A.1812A) that would make significant amendments to the General Business Law's provisions regarding illegal monopolies. While it is important for antitrust laws to be enforced against anti-competitive conduct, the resulting vague and broad provisions of this bill would allow enforcement and penalties against business conduct that is clearly pro- competitive and which results in consumer benefits. The bill would also significantly expand the opportunity to bring cases under anti-trust, by authorizing private class action suits for the recovery of damages. This legislation would serve to undermine competition rather than enhance it, by creating and applying new, undefined criteria to regulate market behavior. Its impact would be felt across all business sectors and the Legislature should reject it. The BCW has joined a statewide coalition of organizations that will be meeting on a regular basis and will be a strong advocate in defeating this legislation.
- + **Oppose** any new costly mandates on businesses. Last year the New York Hero Act was enacted that mandated new regulatory and reporting requirements for employers in efforts to prevent airborne infections such as COVID-19. The BCW, while supporting the overall objective of the bill of creating safer work environments, vehemently opposed it. It represented yet another costly unfunded mandate for businesses that creates an unnecessary layer of

regulation that will merely serve as a burden to already struggling businesses across the state. The BCW urges the Legislature to not impose any additional costly new mandates on New York State businesses that have already suffered so much. Instead we should be looking for innovative ways to assist them so they can continue to operate and assist in New York's economic recovery.

- + **Monitor** the state's implementation of the minimum wage increases. The 2019 minimum wage law phased in the implementation of a \$15 an hour wage, which as of December 31, 2021 is now fully phased in across the state. The BCW supports employee wage growth, but has always stressed the importance of being mindful of the impact that minimum wage increases are having on businesses and whether or not they are in distress as a result. The ongoing pandemic continues to force many businesses to furlough workers, cut employees and to close. Increases in the minimum wage represent new, additional costs to businesses and may result in further job cuts. The BCW urges State government leaders and the Department of Labor to monitor the impact of the minimum wage increase over the course of the next year.
- + **Amend** the Real Property Tax Law (A.7693) to clarify and restore the intent of Sections 524 referring to administrative filings and 704 referring to the court appeal filing. An amendment is needed to clarify the categories of persons who can file a property tax challenge. Recently, poorly supported case law has developed that upends the statutory definitions of who has standing to file a challenge. The adverse impact that continues to play out in many jurisdictions is that commercial tenants who are directly responsible for the payment of their taxes are left without a remedy to appeal an unfair or unequal assessment despite being granted the right to do so by their owner/landlord.
- + **Support** legislation to level the playing field between Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) and the for-hire industry. The BCW has always argued that TNCs should be held to the same standards with regards to licensing, background checks, insurance and safety requirements. Additionally, the BCW also supports a modification to the taxes that are collected from TNCs so that they go to benefit the local municipalities and the bridge and road infrastructure that the TNCs utilize and that are maintained by the local municipalities.
- + **Maintain** zero percent Qualified Manufacturers Income Tax for New York manufacturers.
- + **Support** tax reforms to reduce compliance costs for New York-based employers.

Assembly members Sandy Galef, Tom Abinanti and Senator Jamaal Bailey address the BCW's Government Action Council.



- + **Prohibit** new mandates. Now, more than ever, the state should not impose any new mandates on municipalities, school districts and taxpayers. The BCW urges the Governor and the Legislature to create meaningful legislation that focuses on alleviating the burdens of mandates that are detrimental to local municipalities and hinder their economic recovery.
- + **Reform** the Scaffold Law in the FY 2023 State Budget. This continues to be one of the major legislative priorities for the BCW in 2022. The reform of this outdated law would assist the state’s economic recovery and free up millions of dollars in state and municipal budgets, save hundreds of millions in infrastructure costs, and release an estimated two hundred million a year in education budgets across the state. The Scaffold Law, written 137 years ago in 1885, costs taxpayers \$785 million annually and private businesses that work on public projects \$1.49 billion annually.
- + **Pass** a serious regulatory reform package to help reduce the state’s onerous regulatory burden. The BCW encourages the Legislature to introduce legislation to end New York’s regulatory barrage. New York has approximately 140,000 pages of regulations. Businesses that are looking to relocate or expand in New York need to see that state government is being proactive in removing obstacles and burdens that have a negative impact on their day-to-day operations.
- + **Reform** the state environmental quality review (SEQR) process. The BCW urges the Governor and the Legislature to amend and in some cases eliminate the SEQR rules and regulations that cause unnecessary delays for important projects throughout the state. This is especially needed now as we move to building sustainable energy infrastructure. Delays cause local municipalities to at times abandon economic development projects, which then prevents new jobs and revenue from being generated. It is clear that the SEQR process has been used to cause serious delays in getting Westchester projects completed in a timely manner. As the county’s energy landscape changes and Westchester looks to build solid renewable energy infrastructure, communities must not use SEQR to delay these projects. If that should happen the county will face reliability issues. Simply put, we can no longer afford not to reform this process.

BCW Executive Vice President John Ravitz and NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli discuss NY State’s economic challenges at the BCW’s Political Leadership Series.



- + **Pass** Public-Private Partnership legislation. The Legislature and Governor should note what other states have accomplished and continue to explore ways to allow New York to authorize private entities to design and build, finance, operate and maintain infrastructure. Public-Private Partnership projects would create new jobs that would bring major revenue back to Westchester County and the rest of the state.
- + **Continue** to create enhanced tax credits for small businesses and adopt new small business tax reform policies to assist small businesses that have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic and which are vital to the health and well-being of our communities. The BCW supports the Governor’s proposal to provide \$100 million in small business tax relief.
- + **Continue** to pass amendments to the state’s Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises (MWBE) program to bolster the program, streamline the application process, enhance opportunities and encourage greater participation.
- + **Continue** to pass on-time budgets in the “light of day.” The passing of the state budget should not occur in the early hours of the morning. Debating and voting on the budget should be done in a transparent manner that gives the public the opportunity to have a clear understanding of the state’s spending plan.
- + **Reduce** the cost of construction on public-private projects. The state must reduce the costs of construction by repealing the Wicks Law and reforming the Public Construction Act.
- + **Oppose** legislation (S.5117/A.7412) that would hold internet service providers subject to the same rules and regulations that power companies must follow. This would lead to less investment and make New York less competitive to neighboring states.
- + **Oppose** legislation (S.1130/A.4283) that would prohibit the sale of commercially bred dogs, cats and rabbits in pet stores. This bill is a broad attempt to over-regulate pet stores and unfairly targets this one industry. It would put pet stores in Westchester County out of business and its employees out of work; and towns, counties and the state would lose out on the tax and license revenue. We should be diligently working to protect our brick and mortar stores and not attempting to place unduly restrictive burdens on them.

NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins welcomes BCW members for the BCW’s 2021 virtual Albany Lobby Day.

- + **Oppose** legislation (S.4730/A.2543) that would expand the application of the state’s False Claims Act to tax issues that would subject individuals and business taxpayers to increased compliance and enforcement uncertainty. The BCW was pleased to see that the Governor vetoed this bill in December 2021 and we will be actively engaged to prevent its passage in 2022.
- + **Enact** legislation to allow non-CPAs to be minority owners of CPA firms, consistent with 49 other states and jurisdictions.
- + **Enact** the Consumer Litigation Funding Act (S.705/A.1270) to promote consumer protections by regulating the consumer litigation financing industry.

## Economic Development

As we move forward, economic development programs and policies will play a major role in the fiscal recovery of Westchester and the rest of the state. They should work to bring back jobs, create new ones and create a competitive environment for businesses to survive, recover and thrive. The BCW will continue to advocate that **the most effective economic development program is the creation of a more competitive business environment**, which can only occur when New York State acts to lower state imposed taxes, fees, assessments and employer mandates.



- + The BCW **supports** the Governor’s Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC) that catalyze job creation and economic development in the state and which will help stimulate the state’s post-pandemic economic recovery. As we move forward, REDCs are more important than ever and will be at the forefront of stimulating the state’s post-pandemic economic recovery. The BCW was pleased to see that the Governor’s FY 2023 Executive Budget includes core funding for a new round of REDC awards totaling \$225 million. The BCW is optimistic that this program will receive funding in the final budget and make its way to communities in Westchester. Most recently, the villages of Ossining and Haverstraw were each awarded a \$10 million grant from the state’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative whose goal is to transform downtown neighborhoods into vibrant communities where New Yorkers want to live, work and play. This was the third year in a row that Westchester communities were selected for downtown improvement. In previous rounds, the Mid-Hudson REDC successfully won downtown grants for New Rochelle and Peekskill.

- + The BCW continues to **oppose** prevailing wage legislation. Four years ago, the BCW formed its Smart Development Working Group that is comprised of Westchester’s most prominent developers, in response to legislation to require the payment of prevailing wages on private construction projects receiving any form of state funding support. The legislation ultimately passed and became effective on January 1st of this year **regardless of the fact that the 13-member Public Subsidy Board called for in the legislation has yet to be appointed**. This is disconcerting since the Board is empowered to make recommendations on the implementation of the new law as well as have the authority to temporarily delay it’s implementation beyond January 1, 2022 if there is likely to be significant negative economic impact of implementing it. While we wait to see what transpires, we need to be mindful of additional prevailing wage legislation that could be introduced in 2022 that could further increase the cost of private construction projects that bring new residents, new jobs, and new opportunities to Westchester County.

- + The BCW, along with it’s Smart Development Working Group, **supports** the renewal, extension and strengthening of the Brownfield Clean Up Program (S.7210/A.8228) that incentivizes private-sector redevelopment of contaminated brownfield sites across the State. Over the years, the Brownfields Cleanup Program has proved to be critical in efforts to correct environmental injustices, combat neighborhood blight, and provide thousands of homes – including over 6,000 affordable housing units - statewide for New Yorkers who need it the most. Since the last reauthorization of the program in 2015, 452 sites in every county of the state have participated. Notably, nearly 50 percent of those projects have been located in Environmental Zones, defined by DEC as areas with high rates of poverty and unemployment. The program has generated \$17.6 billion in economic development activity thus far, with more benefits expected as more than 900 additional sites are pending completion in the coming years. The BCW supports a 10 year reauthorization of the Program and its associated tax credits, as well as additional funding for the Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program and an expansion of the program to allow use of BOA funds for pre-development projects in designated communities. This will incentivize brownfield projects within the more than 60 designated BOAs in disadvantaged and urban communities through enhanced BCP tax credits.

ABOVE LEFT: BCW President & CEO Marsha Gordon was proud to announce that the villages of Ossining and Haverstraw were selected as winners of the 2021 New York State Downtown Reinvestment Initiative.

- ✦ The BCW **supports** legislation to lower Unemployment Insurance (UI) taxes and to allocate state and federal funds to restore the UI system. New York's economy remains fragile and any progress towards recovery from the pandemic will only be further delayed until the state addresses UI taxes and the solvency of the Trust Fund. The pandemic completely upended the UI system. The private sector shed more than 1.7 million jobs in March 2020, driving unemployment from 4.4 percent to 16.2 percent. Extraordinary amounts of money flowed out of the New York UI Trust Fund to satisfy claims, and the state needed to borrow more than \$11 billion from the federal government. The outstanding loan and completely depleted UI Trust Fund have forced all employers into the highest employer contribution rates allowable under New York's UI tax tables, meaning all businesses are paying the highest possible UI tax rate related to the fund balance. With \$9.3 billion outstanding on the state's federal UI advance, New York employers are subject to these highest rates for years. Replenishing the UI Trust Fund should not and cannot solely fall on the backs of New York employers for actions mandated by state government and which have already suffered immense financial harm.
- ✦ The BCW **supports** the creation of a Market/Shovel Ready Fund to facilitate the development of sites that would attract high-tech manufacturing, warehouse/distribution/logistics, and facilitate the development multi-tenant business technology parks to support the growth of smaller advanced manufacturing businesses. This advance work creates a site where construction can begin rapidly once a prospective business decides to develop a facility there. By reducing the time it takes a company to begin construction of a new facility, the state and its local partners will be able to provide valuable savings to the business as well as job opportunities for local residents.
- ✦ Expand and make permanent the extension of the design-build method of project delivery for state agency projects. In 2019, a bill was enacted to allow New York City to use "design-build" for its big projects. This allows the city to cut through red tape and save time and money on critical projects. The BCW urges the Legislature to grant similar authority to state agencies so they too can see similar results throughout New York State.



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 Assemblyman Gary Pretlow and Senator Shelley Mayer discuss the importance of giving Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts a full gaming license.  
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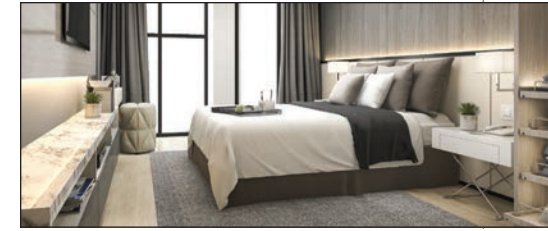
- ✦ The BCW **supports** Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) and opposes any legislation that seeks to hinder their effectiveness at promoting and assisting in the economic recovery of New York State. This includes legislation (S.977A/A2631A) to increase the oversight powers of the Authorities Budget Office that would grant it the authority to shut down public authorities or IDAs it deems non-compliant. This bill would adversely impact economic development efforts across New York State, at a time when we need to support our local economic development organizations more than ever.
- ✦ The BCW **supports** IDA sales tax exemptions and pilot programs with local towns to incentivize in-state investments and job creation.
- ✦ The BCW **supports** the expansion of high-quality and affordable broadband access for all New York State residents. We recognize the importance of broadband and the need to close the digital divide which we will focus on at the BCW's Virtual Broadband Conference in February 2022. Over the past decade, we have seen every sector of our economy benefited by the pace of change in the technology ecosystem, with broadband connectivity being the foundation of this digital economy. Broadband will continue to evolve and usher in new and unparalleled experiences for businesses and consumers. However, the past two years of pandemic shutdowns have underscored the dire need to not be complacent and strive for improved partnerships across our region to ensure all parties have the same opportunity for access and adoption to these important tools. The BCW asks that the state work cooperatively with the private sector to streamline coordination and eliminate incongruous policies that make fiber optic deployments cost prohibitive; to roll back onerous regulatory requirements, like the use and occupancy fee for state-owned rights-of-way, that disincentivize infrastructure needed to expand connectivity; resist the urge to add duplicative layers of punitive regulations on the telecommunications industry; and support and facilitate the development of 5G small designs that allow multiple carriers to expedite deployment and foster competition.
- ✦ The BCW also **supports** the extensive implementation of 5G, the next generation of wireless technology, across the state. The BCW is a member of a statewide coalition (NYersFor5G) that is advocating for a reliable, robust and high-speed wireless network which is crucial to helping rebuild New York's economy and maintaining the state's competitive edge while supporting and improving many facets of our daily lives. High-speed wireless networks will also help New York's small businesses



by ensuring that they have full cellular coverage and access to high-speed broadband service to enable them to compete in the global marketplace. In New York, the implementation of 5G is expected to generate more than 193,000 wireless-related jobs and nearly \$28.2 billion in economic growth over the next five years. To meet the challenges ahead we will need a next generation 5G wireless network.

- + The BCW **supports** legislation (S.5389/A.712) that would provide parity between different sectors of the telecommunications industry delivering similar services and provide clarity on the taxation of wireless telecommunications equipment owned by wireless service providers. Broad reforms are necessary to New York's tax laws to address significant changes in telecommunication technologies and in telecommunications markets. This legislation is one step toward that goal, and will avoid the imposition of millions of dollars in additional tax burdens, never contemplated or approved by the State Legislature, on businesses while they are attempting to upgrade the state's wireless networks.
- + The BCW **supports** adopting broad reforms in the state's business tax to reduce compliance costs and make the state's tax code more supportive on in-state investments and job creation.
- + The BCW continues to **oppose** employee's lien legislation (S.2762/A.766) that would allow the imposition of a lien on personal property of employers based on a claim of wage and hour violations. This legislation would be unjustifiable burdensome to Westchester employers as it allows employees to secure a lien before an allegation is proven. This could potentially affect the credit lines of small businesses and put businesses at risk without any misconduct ever being proven.
- + The BCW continues to **support** a Hospitality Relief Package to provide assistance to the hospitality and tourism sector of the economy that has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Westchester County suffered a significant blow as **the economic shutdown resulted in a 43 percent decline (-\$863.3 million) in visitor spending to \$1.15 billion**. All travel-dependent sectors including lodging, food & beverage and transportation, were dramatically affected by the downturn in visitor volume and spending. The County's position as a business and overnight destination weighed heavily with hotel revenues hit hard. In the first twelve months of the pandemic revenues declined 56.3 percent from the previous twelve months. Hotel occupancy fell to 49.8 percent of available rooms. The County lost over 1300 rooms permanently during 2020, a 20 percent decline in hotel inventory over 2019. Permanent closures include the Doral Arrowwood, Hilton Westchester, Renaissance Westchester and LaQuinta in Armonk. The hospitality sector is vital to the state's economy, not only

providing services, but also employing hundreds of thousands of people across the state. It is imperative that New York State does all it can to help revitalize this industry that has proven to generate revenue to municipalities and, in many cases, has served as an incubator for workforce development.



- + The BCW, working with the Westchester Hotel Association, **supports** legislation to regulate Short Term Rentals (STRs) (S.5665/A.6003) This legislation is needed to level the playing field between STR platforms and the regulated businesses in the tourism industry that provide traditional lodging options to consumers throughout the state. This legislation would not only enhance safety by requiring STRs to adhere to fire and safety regulations, but would also require STRs to pay sales and occupancy taxes, thus bringing much needed additional revenue to the state and local governments.
- + The BCW and the Westchester Hotel Association additionally **support** Americans with Disabilities Act Website legislation (S.7374/A.8054). This will address the lawsuits that have plagued the hospitality industry in recent years, as there is no federal regulation that specifies what qualifies a website or mobile application as compliant. The vague nature of the existing guidance leaves an entire industry vulnerable to these lawsuits. This legislation would provide businesses with an opportunity to correct any alleged violation prior to the commencement of an action.
- + The BCW and the Westchester Hotel Association will continue to **oppose** legislation (S.468/A.450) to require employers of retail, food service or cleaning employees to give their employees' 7-day notice of their work schedule and a month's notice of the minimum hours of work they will be assigned. This is not practical in the hospitality industry that is constantly evolving on a day-to-day basis and which is subject to circumstances, which they have no control over.
- + The BCW and the Westchester Hotel Association will continue to **oppose** legislation (S.3546) stating that an employer may not schedule or require an employee to work during rest periods defined as the first ten hours following the end of the previous calendar day's work shift or on-call shift, or the first ten hours following the end of a work shift or on-call shift that spanned two calendar days. This bill would effectively tie the hands of the hotel industry whose many employees prefer the convenience of back-to-back shifts.

✦ The BCW **supports** chapter amendments (S.7700/A.8689) to Chapter 732 of 2021 that created the New York State 250th Commemoration Act that will establish a commemoration commission to develop a plan to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution that will highlight New York's role in the founding of the nation. The establishment of the commission will allow New York State to join the federal America250 efforts that are underway to celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026.



✦ The BCW **supports** fast-tracking the approval and deployment of matching construction and renovation capital from the Empire State Economic Development Fund for the purpose of moving emerging life sciences and health technologies companies out of regional incubators/accelerators and placing them into their own dedicated workspaces, which will further ignite localized job growth. As part of an open and transparent process, applicants should receive funding approval (or denial) from the state within 20 days of application submittal, with fund distribution to approved companies (and lab/office space developers) occurring within 30 days. Companies who have already received funding from New York State – especially research and development tax credits from the state's \$650 million Life Sciences Initiative – should receive the fastest decisions and distribution of funds. Only by accelerating the process under which these burgeoning firms can access capital funding will Westchester County see significant growth in its life sciences and health technologies sector, as we are facing increasing competition from world-class life sciences hubs in Massachusetts and California, as well as nearby clusters in New Jersey and Connecticut.

**Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts**

**Downstate Commercial Casino Licenses Must Happen Now**

Grappling with COVID-19 during the past two years has challenged New York State's economy in deep and wide-ranging ways – and we are not out of the woods yet. Over one million jobs in our state have disappeared and unemployment remains staggeringly

high at 6.9 percent, much higher than the pre-pandemic rate of 3.8 percent. Economic development remains at a crawl and investments in our communities are sorely needed. Albany must address this need with bold, swift action to jumpstart our recovery. Creating a speedy path to downstate gaming is a critical part of the solution. Westchester County is home to one of the most prominent gaming and

entertainment destinations in the tristate area – Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts. As the largest private employer in Yonkers, boasting an annual payroll of over \$80 million and more than 1,000 employees prior to the pandemic, Empire City – which was acquired by MGM Resorts in January 2019 – is integral to the economic growth of Westchester County and New York State.

**Empire City Casino generates hundreds of millions of dollars for state education funding and in tax revenue for state and local government coffers.**

New Yorkers recognized the potential for greater job creation, economic investment and tax revenue in gaming and entertainment when they approved seven full commercial casinos in a referendum in 2013. Four of the licenses have been awarded, but under applicable law, the state cannot issue the remaining licenses until the end of 2023, at the earliest. Given the

current economic realities facing our region and the state overall, we cannot afford to wait to begin the process of awarding the remaining licenses.

Allowing Empire City Casino to achieve its potential as a full-scale commercial casino now would significantly speed up the state's recovery and help put New Yorkers back to work in family-sustaining union jobs. The BCW has no doubt that if a fair and transparent process is put in place to quickly award the available downstate licenses, Empire City Casino would be selected. This would mean 13,000 jobs for Westchester and the Bronx, including Empire City directly hiring more than 2,500 employees. Projected to generate more than \$1 billion in economic activity and hundreds of millions in private capital investment for the region, a full-scale casino license at Empire City will help New York State and Westchester County recover from the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic, generate significant and immediate new revenue for the state through

*BCW Executive Vice President John Ravitz serves as the Co-Chair for the "A Sure Bet for New York's Future Alliance" that consists of more than 70 labor, businesses, non-profits, and community organizations working together to ensure that Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts obtains a full gaming license.*



license fees, and bring investment to help communities like Yonkers, Mount Vernon and the Bronx, which have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

MGM Resorts has invested \$850 million in Empire City Casino and is prepared to invest more. Empire City is shovel-ready to become a full-scale casino, swapping out electronic video lottery terminals for Vegas-style slot machines, live-dealer table games, retail sports betting and exciting entertainment and dining amenities. As a commercial casino, Empire City can recapture the gaming and entertainment revenues currently flowing from New York to neighboring states like New Jersey,

Pennsylvania and Connecticut. All it takes is for the Executive and State Legislature to enact a fair and transparent downstate casino licensing process before the new fiscal year takes effect on April 1.

**The state should seize the opportunity now to enable this vital economic engine to do more for New York as a full-scale commercial casino. New York has rightly mobilized all our resources to take on COVID – we must take the same approach to recover from the economic crisis the pandemic has wrought.**

## **Energy**

Westchester County's energy landscape is dramatically changing. The Indian Point Energy Center, the provider of approximately 25 percent of our region's electricity ceased operations on April 30, 2021. In addition, a natural gas moratorium has remained in place for three years in the southern section of Westchester County. The BCW has continuously raised concerns that these two decisions could impact the reliability of our power grid and cause an increase in electric rates; result in negative environmental impacts due to increases in carbon emissions; and ultimately cause serious economic impacts for the entire county. The BCW supports the prompt decommissioning of the Indian Point site with the necessary environmental provisions in order to make the potential reuse of the site feasible as part of a vibrant regional economy. Attempts to extract additional payments from the site will be counter-productive to the shared goal of prompt decommissioning.

The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) implementation continues to move forward. It sets several ambitious targets – 70 percent of New York's electricity must come from renewable sources by 2030, the complete decarbonization of the power generation sector by 2040, and the state achieving "net zero" emissions by 2050. These goals will require developing and deploying myriad renewable resources and technologies throughout the state, some of which do not exist yet. The decisions made now will have a lasting impact on the state's economy and our everyday lives.

The BCW is concerned that:

- ✦ The Plan will double energy costs in the state.
- ✦ The Plan cannot be implemented in New York State's stated timeframe with the currently available resources or 15-year timeframe.
- ✦ Even in a best-case scenario, there will be insufficient renewable generation and storage to support the proposed loads.
- ✦ Will there be consistent funding to support the creation of the renewable infrastructure that needs to be created?

Considering the above mentioned concerns, the BCW has joined with several members of the Climate Action Council (CAC) to urge the Council to retain an independent consultant to conduct a quantitative analysis of the potential impacts of compliance with the CLCPA on New York State businesses. A detailed assessment of such costs is critical in understanding the most effective means to achieve the CLCPA's greenhouse gas reduction targets and will be instrumental to the CAC in developing its draft Scoping Plan. It is imperative that New York State adopts a realistic energy plan that provides sufficient energy to run the state in the most cost-effective means.

**The BCW has always supported the implementation of new renewable sources of energy.** As this new energy infrastructure is being built, the state cannot afford to dismiss the concept that there is a not a role for natural gas as a means to facilitate the transition towards a renewable-based future. It is critical for the state to remove obstacles to building the renewable infrastructure that will be needed to support these new sources of energy. Communities cannot use the "Not in My Back Yard" (NIMBY) argument to stop or delay this critical process. These vital infrastructure projects must be built in a timely manner. The BCW hosted numerous virtual meetings this past year with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority and the Public Service Commission to explore these issues; and also raised reliability concerns with the Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation and Energy Committees. The BCW continues to help educate its members and **this past year held a virtual Energy Conferences to apprise Westchester's business community on the many energy programs that are available to assist them.** The BCW will continue to ask the tough questions to ensure that Westchester's energy infrastructure can continue to support economic development that is vital to the success of the county for both residents and businesses.



Additionally, the BCW opposes the Governor's new proposal to create a statewide ban on natural gas hookups in new buildings. Implementing a statewide ban on gas hookups before the state's renewable energy infrastructure is completed could cause a decline in new construction going forward, as well as cause possible rent increases to tenants. As previously stated, continuing to use gas transmissions during the transition to renewable energy must not be ignored.

*The BCW makes the following additional energy policy recommendations for 2022:*

#### **Develop and Construct New Electric Car Infrastructure**

Of the total greenhouse gas emissions in New York City, 24 percent comes from vehicles, yet of 10.8 million registered vehicles in our state, only about 45,000 run on alternative fuels. New York State needs to provide more electric car infrastructure such as more charging stations along major highways and at transportation hubs to encourage more drivers to purchase electric vehicles. Additionally, local jurisdictions should accelerate permitting to facilitate such construction.



#### **The New York State Renewable Reclamation Projects Program**

The BCW supports legislation (S.3289/A.3855) to establish the New York State Renewable Reclamation Projects Program for the development of renewable electric generation projects. New York State's goal to generate 50 percent of its electricity from renewables by 2030 requires a momentous effort. To meet this goal, New York must nearly double the amount of renewable energy available – and install roughly eight times more wind and solar – than exists today. However, this laudable goal must be accomplished while also considering the costs to customers. Additionally, Westchester County is responding to natural gas supply constraints. Businesses and homeowners are installing electrified ground and air source heat pumps to meet their energy needs. In order to close the gap for this new electrical demand, it makes environmental and economic sense to use renewable electricity that is brought online and generated in the most cost effective way possible.

#### **Funding for the New York State Cessation and Mitigation Fund**

The BCW urges for additional funding for the New York State Cessation and Mitigation Fund to assist municipalities and localities with the loss of property tax revenue following the closure of an electric generating facility.

#### **Elimination and Reduction of Taxes, Surcharges and Fees**

New Yorkers pay some of the highest utility prices in the country, and approximately 25 percent of their typical monthly electric bill is for taxes, fees, and surcharges. Energy taxes often start as temporary surcharges but end up becoming permanent and, in aggregate, they cost our citizens at least \$1.6 billion annually. These taxes are regressive, burdening the lowest-income New Yorkers disproportionately.

Eliminating these taxes and fees will stimulate our economy, freeing consumers to spend on other goods and needs. With those goals in mind, the BCW favors a significant reduction in ratepayers assessments imposed by the Public Service Commission. Ratepayer funds should support the adoption of more cost effective and market driven solutions to achieving social objectives.

#### **Support for Renewable Energy Generating Projects**

The BCW supports legislation (S.2995/A.6838) to allow certain renewable energy generating projects that are located above real property currently used for vehicle parking to bypass the parkland alienation process. This bill will assist the county in implementing innovative energy projects to help meet the ambitious goals of the CLCPA. As Westchester County and counties across the state look for ways to implement the CLCPA, interest in solar projects in the airspace above vehicle parking has increased. Solar projects are one source of renewable energy that is clean and provides cost savings. This bill will allow certain solar projects, those that do not exceed two megawatts of generating capacity and are located above parking areas to be replicated more efficiently, saving time and reducing the county's carbon footprint at a faster pace.

#### **Energy Brokers and Energy Consultants**

The BCW opposes legislation (S.4032/A.3166) that would create a regulatory framework for energy brokers and energy consultants. This legislation unfairly targets this industry and the registration requirement will only lead to more consolidation in the industry leaving fewer choices for customers.







## Environment

The BCW will closely monitor this year’s discussion on the reinstatement of the \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Environmental Bond Act and the Governor’s FY2023 budget proposal to add an additional \$1 billion bringing the total to \$4 billion to fund various environmental projects across the state. While passed by the Legislature in 2020, the Act will need to be approved by voters in November 2022 to become effective. The bonds would provide funding for open space infrastructure, green buildings, water infrastructure and other priorities, including responses to climate change. The BCW while supportive of its passage, continues to be concerned about its funding and recognizes that increased federal support for the state may be critical in moving this forward.

Additionally, in 2022:

- + As a member of the statewide Clean Water Jobs Creation Coalition, the BCW will urge the Governor and the Legislature to continue to invest in clean water projects through New York State’s Clean Water Infrastructure Grant program. Projects supported with the program invest in and improve Westchester’s clean water infrastructure and will aid in helping to retain and bring back jobs.
- + **The BCW supports the Governor’s budget proposal to allocate \$400 million for the Environmental Protection Fund** that provides funding for critical environmental programs such as land acquisition, farmland protection, invasive species prevention and eradication, enhanced recreational access, water quality

improvement, and an aggressive environmental justice agenda. The BCW has always supported this program and is hopeful that this record level of funding will be in the final budget.

- + The BCW supports legislation (S.2962A/A.862A) creating a Low Carbon Fuel Standard in New York State that would promote innovative technologies to lower greenhouse emissions and reduce pollution from mobile transportation sources. This program would help meet the goals of the Climate Leadership and Communities Protection Act and would be self-funded through its credit mechanism. Each year a carbon goal would be set. Transportation fuels in use rated below the goal receive credits and fuels above the level must reduce their carbon intensity for buy credits from lower carbon fuels. Hence, higher carbon fuels with the greatest adverse impact to public health and the environment reward the lower carbon fuels through the acquisition of credits. This benefits all New Yorkers with cleaner air and lower carbon emissions.

## Transportation

The BCW commends Congress and the President for passing into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to invest in the nation’s infrastructure. The effect of the massive infusion of infrastructure spending will have a major impact for years to come while also infusing states with money for projects that will in turn create jobs.

**The BCW advocates that the state needs to prioritize where these critical and limited funds go, as a modern and well-maintained transportation network is vital to the state’s economy.** It is especially important that Westchester County has a strong, fiscally sound transportation network which will serve as an important economic development tool for recruiting and retaining businesses in the county. This is essential in efforts to relieve congestion, improve road, bridge and transit conditions, boost safety, and support long-term economic growth in New York.

The BCW was pleased to see that the Governor proposes to increase the statewide “Bridge NY” program by an additional \$1 billion in the next five-year capital plan. This program provides



essential funding to enhance the safety, resiliency and reliability of critical municipally owned infrastructure. The BCW advocates that Westchester receive its fair share, as these funds are surely needed.

Seven years ago, the BCW joined a statewide organization, “Rebuild New York,” to urge for much needed funding for state and local transportation infrastructure. TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research organization, issued a report in January 2022 that examined the state’s largest urban areas. It found that roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost New York motorists a total of \$28 billion

statewide annually – \$3,192 per driver in the New York-Newark-Jersey City urban area – due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels can help relieve traffic congestion, improve road, bridge and transit conditions, boost safety, and support long-term economic growth in New York. The TRIP report found that 44 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the New York-Newark-Jersey City urban area are in poor condition and another 24 percent are in mediocre condition. This report underscores the need to make infrastructure funding a priority.

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## **Housing**

Housing is critical to attracting employers and employees to Westchester County. In 2022, the BCW will work with the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors to:

### **Oppose Good Cause Eviction Legislation**

This legislation (S.3082/A.5573) would establish an onerous and overly restrictive “good cause eviction” standard and impose de facto rent control statewide without any home rule option. This bill essentially provides tenants with a perpetual lease even when terms of that lease have expired, which is simply impractical. This would be disastrous for both tenants and property owners as owners would no longer be able to collect enough revenue to maintain their buildings and some would not be able to pay their property taxes. In turn, the housing supply will fall and tenants will not be able to find good, affordable apartments.

### **Protect Independent Contractor Status for Real Estate Licensees**

Oppose any legislation that would result in removal of independent contractor status from licensed real estate brokers and salespersons. Legislative proposals such as A.2685 seek to redefine the term “employee,” however those actions conflict with existing Labor Law exemptions for licensed real estate professionals. The BCW opposes any legislation that does not provide a clear exemption for the professional services of a licensed qualified real estate agent.

### **Strengthen Fair Housing Laws in New York**

Support equal opportunity in housing and oppose illegal discrimination as maintaining the integrity of fair housing policies in New York is of utmost importance. The BCW also supports the Fairness in Cooperative Homeownership Act (S.2846/A.5856) that would provide greater transparency to the process of considering the sale of shares in a cooperative housing corporation by requiring a timeline for cooperative boards to act on applications. This updated process would provide fairness and transparency in the cooperative housing purchase process and combat illegal discrimination.

### **Provide Relief to Tenants and Building Owners**

It is critical that New York provide relief to tenants who are unable to pay their rent due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. **It is equally important that New York State create a balance of fairness to this program in order to protect building and property owners who are struggling to pay their mortgage and property taxes as a result of the non-payment of rents.**



### **Expand Access to Homeownership**

Many New Yorkers hope to achieve their dream of homeownership, however financial obstacles, including some of the highest-in-the-nation property taxes and closing costs serve as deterrents. The BCW strongly supports legislation to help New Yorkers overcome these barriers to homeownership, especially for first-time homebuyers.

### **Reduce State and Local Real Estate Taxes**

The BCW opposes any legislation that would increase state or local mortgage recording taxes or real estate transfer taxes. Increasing real estate transaction taxes simply robs equity from homebuyers who could better use such funds towards a down payment. New York State already has some of the highest closing costs and real estate taxes in the country, and individuals and businesses are choosing to leave the state due to over-taxation. In order to reverse this trend, New York should be advancing policies that make home buying more affordable.

## Child Care

The pandemic has highlighted the direct link between access to child care and people getting to work. Historically, a significant number of working parents in Westchester have been over-income for the State's child care subsidy program, left to face **child care costs that take up 40 percent and 50 percent of their household income.** Westchester County Executive George Latimer and the Board of Legislators, recognizing that a solid and sustained economic recovery requires expanded access to child care, made a landmark investment in the 2022 county budget.



The need for help paying for child care however, requires a considerable uptick in state investment as well. We call on the State Legislature to build on the solid budget recommendations made by Governor Hochul, a long-time and passionate advocate for child care, to further expand eligibility for child care subsidies, increase the reimbursement rates for child care businesses and fund a child care workforce wage initiative.

## Healthcare

Over the past two years, the pandemic has certainly brought to light the importance of the healthcare sector and its professionals who have worked tirelessly to treat COVID patients. As we enter the third year, we continue to see an exodus of health care professionals leaving their respective fields due to retirement, burn out or the pursuit of other careers. The nursing shortage in New York State and across the country is well documented and has only been exacerbated by the pandemic. One of the biggest contributors to nursing shortages is the declining number of educators who can train the next generation. A survey released in September 200 by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing indicates the vacancy rate for faculty positions increased from 6.5 percent in 2020 to 8 percent in 2021. The association reports that U.S. nursing schools turned away more than 80,000 qualified applicants for nursing programs in 2019, mostly because of faculty shortages. The BCW has held meetings with the Governor's office to voice these concerns and advocate for the **BCWs priorities that would help address the nursing shortage and expand the health care worker pipeline** by supporting:

- ✦ The Clinical Preceptor Tax Credit Act (S.4229/A. 285) that would provide personal income tax credits to thousands of community-based clinicians who provide New York State-required clinical training opportunities for students studying to enter various health care professions. Five states have enacted similar legislation and five other states have proposed similar legislation.

- ✦ Healthcare simulation legislation (S.6717/ A.7767) that would increase the number of hours of clinical simulation-based learned experiences (SBLE) allowable to fulfill requisite clinical education hours. SBLEs leverage multiple technologies to provide for hands-on learning in a safe environment and allow healthcare students to experience curriculum-guided, deliberately chosen situations they may never experience in a clinical training environment, but will need to be prepared for in the workforce. Use of this training technology is already widely used in New York and nationally to supplement clinical training.



- ✦ Including private, nonprofit and profit colleges and universities in the recently announced Nurses For Our Future Scholarship Program to ensure equitable treatment of all New York State nursing students.
- ✦ Reinstating, improving and expanding the New York State Nursing Faculty Loan Forgiveness (NFLF) Incentive Program.

Additionally, in 2022 the BCW will:

- ✦ **Continue to adamantly oppose any attempt to create a single-payer health insurance system in New York State** (i.e. The New York Health Act). The cost to implement the New York Health Act (S.5474/A.6058) has already been well documented and now, more than ever, New York simply cannot afford this. The increase to future New York State budgets would be catastrophic. New York cannot afford and should not tear down its existing health care system that has already enrolled over 4.9 million New Yorkers in the past few years. Due to the implementation of the New York Health Exchange, New York currently covers 95 percent of its residents under a combination of private and public health plans. The legislation destroys the current system of health care coverage by banning the sale of private health insurance in New York State, while doing nothing to address the increasing costs of health care. The New York Health Act would result in the largest state tax increase in the history of the U.S. An independent study conducted by the RAND Corporation found that the legislation would require at least \$210 billion in new taxes when fully implemented. RAND did not include the cost of long-term care benefits, which requires an additional \$42.7 billion in taxes. This is three times more than what New York State currently collects to pay for everything from schools to roads and bridges. Instead, the Legislature and Governor should work to improve the New York Health Exchange so that those New Yorkers who have not yet enrolled in the program have the opportunity to identify and select a health care plan that will work for themselves and their families.

- ✦ Continue to educate the business community on all the aspects of the New York Health Exchange, including what tax credits are available for employers who offer health insurance to their employees.
- ✦ Support patient access reforms that eliminate health disparities and patient access barriers to treatment.
- ✦ Continue to advocate for the adoption of strong transparency regulations for the Department of Financial Services that sets the rates for the health insurance plans under the Health Exchange.
- ✦ Support the enactment of Medical Liability Tort Reform to rein in the costs of medical malpractice insurance.
- ✦ Support legislation that effectively addresses the rising costs of prescription drugs without price controls.

### Mental Health

The pandemic and the resulting economic implications have negatively affected many people’s mental health and created new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness. Surveys show that there has been a major increase in the number of U.S. adults who report symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia during the pandemic, compared with surveys before the pandemic. This has brought mental health to the forefront for many employers as the pandemic wears on. Additionally, similar to the healthcare workforce, **there is a shortage of mental health care professionals to care for these increased numbers that will need to be addressed.**

The BCW joins the Mental Health Association of Westchester in supporting:

- ✦ Legislation to help address the workforce shortage in the mental health industry by advocating for a New York version of the Federal Relief Act that would provide sustainable long term funding for the behavioral health workforce.
- ✦ Legislation (S.7577/A.8675) to help spur a public awareness change in the workforce. This bill would require that employers distribute written materials regarding mental health conditions and resources and have at least one poster or pamphlet posted within an easily accessible area within the workplace. It would also require the commissioners of the Labor Department and the Office of Mental Health to establish a framework and voluntary standards for addressing mental health in the workplace with the goal of increasing public awareness on mental health issues while minimizing the stigma of mental health within the workplace.

### Education



Preparing New York State’s students to acquire the skills needed to attend college and/or to prepare them to enter the work force will continue to be a top priority for the BCW. Six years ago, the BCW joined a statewide coalition, the New York Equity Coalition comprised of civil rights, education, parent and business organizations to continue to engage in serious conversations on how schools can raise the achievement levels for their students in a responsible, reasonable and inclusive manner.

The pandemic exacerbated many of the inequities that have persisted in our education system. Now, the state’s path to recovery will rely upon our education system’s ability to ensure that all students have access to high-quality academic coursework. As the state focuses its efforts on diversity, equity and inclusion, we must ensure that all students leave high school prepared for college, careers and active citizenship.

In order to achieve equitable outcomes—better graduation rates, college matriculation and completion rates, career placement, family-sustaining wages, and greater civic engagement—New Yorkers must insist on equitable access to rigorous instruction, support from strong educators, and enrollment in the full range of courses that lead to college and career preparedness for all students.

As school districts across New York receive an unprecedented influx of new funding from the state and federal government, **it is crucial that school districts direct these resources to ensuring more students have opportunities for academic acceleration including access to courses that will prepare them for postsecondary success.**

The BCW joins the Coalition on calling on our state leaders to:

- ✦ Invest in infrastructure that supports more access to Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment courses in high-need school districts—including high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers, equity-driven course enrollment policies and expanding access to school counselors who are culturally responsive and can help students navigate the course selection process.
- ✦ Require school districts to provide every family with clear and concise information, in multiple languages, beginning in the late elementary grades about the courses their child can take in middle and high school to prepare for college, careers and active citizenship—including the benefits of enrolling in advanced courses and the support available.

- ✦ Enable automatic enrollment in the next available advanced course for students who demonstrate readiness using one of multiple measures. Families would always have the right to decline this automatic enrollment if they do not want their child to participate in the course.
- ✦ Ensure that any school or school district that has disparities in advanced course enrollment is implementing an action plan to decrease disproportionality with parent, educator and student input.



In addition to supporting the work of the Coalition, the BCW advocates for:

- ✦ Legislation to provide an annual growth amount for **tuition and regional rate reimbursement** for approved school-age and preschool special education programs so that students with disabilities are supported on par with students in general education. The BCW recognizes the importance of schools and programs that provide education and related services to students who are unable to be served by their public school district because of a disability or other factors. Parity in growth to the trend factor recognized that students with disabilities should be supported at the same rate as their peers in public school districts. This legislation would align the trend factors for those supported by the tuition rate methodology with annual increases in public school funding. This would provide much needed financial predictability and stability for approved school-age and preschool programs serving students with disabilities which, in turn, will allow them to adequately recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and staff.

And joins the Lower Hudson Education Coalition in advocating for:

- ✦ **Student Mental Health & School Safety:** Make significant resources available in schools and communities to support and expand mental health services for students due to the rise in trauma, social disconnection, isolation, stress and fear; provide resources to the community providers of mental health services, including the statutory cost of living adjustment and community reinvestment; and provide additional flexible resources for school safety, including funding for staffing, security upgrades, professional development and training.

- ✦ **Foundation Aid Formula and Regional Cost Index:** In order to provide school districts with adequate and representative state aid, updated data inputs and adjustments to the current formula are needed. Additionally, Lower Hudson Valley should have a regional cost index that better reflects the cost of operating in the New York City suburbs.
- ✦ **Mandate Transparency and Relief:** In order for local school districts' ability to manage the significant cost burdens of complying with mandates, there is the need to increase transparency prior to the enactment of new mandates and to conduct a thorough review of existing mandates. Require a complete fiscal note, prepared by a New York State actuary, to accompany each education-related bill, prior to the passage of legislation; and establish an Education Mandate Relief Redesign Team. Similar to efforts undertaken by the State in 2011, this redesign team should be tasked with reviewing ways to reduce the costs of unfunded mandates by determining how school districts may be given greater ability to control costs.

## Higher Education

**An educated workforce is critical to reviving Westchester County's economic vitality** and the BCW believes that higher education should be accessible and affordable in order to meet the needs of the many companies that call the Lower Hudson Valley home. To that end, the BCW urges the Legislature to improve the state's successful Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) by increasing the minimum and maximum awards and permitting graduate students to participate in it. The BCW additionally supports the Governor's proposal to expand access to part-time TAP to make it easier for students with work or family responsibilities to attend school. The Legislature should also modify the Enhanced Tuition Awards Program to attract additional participants by removing government-imposed caps



on tuition charges and residency and employment requirements. And lastly, the Legislature should also maintain the Bundy Aid Program, a successful program that helps make college more affordable, and the Higher Education Capital Matching Grant Program, which creates jobs while simultaneously helping schools to modernize and enhance their facilities.



### **Criminal Justice**

As the state re-emerges from the pandemic, the BCW advocates that **a flawed criminal justice system will impede economic development and the state’s recovery**. The bail reform package of 2019 proved to be very contentious and its reforms bar judges from imposing bail as a condition for release on most misdemeanors and non-violent felonies. It also changes to speed up the evidentiary discovery process.

The intentions in passing the reforms were commendable, as economic status should not dictate whether someone stays behind bars pending trial. However, the decision to specify a limited number of offenses where judges can set bail or remand, and then require pretrial release for all other offenses, with no judicial discretion on defendant flight risk or potential danger to the community was a major error. The BCW will continue to monitor this issue closely as the debate continues on whether additional reforms are introduced.

The BCW will also be monitoring the discussion on the Clean Slate Act that would seal certain felony records after sentences have been completed. The BCW understands the need to remove barriers of former incarnated individuals that can limit their access to opportunities such as employment and housing and will be following this closely.

## FEDERAL

As we enter 2022 and continue to address the effects of the pandemic, the BCW thanks Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and the members of the Westchester Congressional delegation for their help in enacting the **American Rescue Plan Act of 2021**, a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill; and the \$1.2 trillion **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**. **These Acts will do much to speed up the country’s recovery from the economic effects of the pandemic** and will allow states like New York to re-emerge and concentrate on rebuilding the state’s economy. The BCW is also confident that the **Build Back Better Act** to support an array of social and climate programs will pass this year in one form or another, which will bring additional needed resources to the state and Westchester County.

The BCW is hopeful that the consistent gridlock that occurred much too often in 2021 will not be repeated in 2022, as there is too much important work that needs to be accomplished as the nation rebounds from the pandemic.



The BCW looks forward to working with Westchester’s Congressional delegation on the following issues in 2022:

- + The BCW has consistently **urged** Congress to adopt common-sense tax reform to simplify the process and lower rates for businesses and individuals. As New York State looks to re-emerge from the pandemic, the federal government must look at ways to alleviate tax and regulatory burdens that have been placed on the backs of businesses of all sizes. The tax reform bill that passed in December of 2017 tried to accomplish some of those goals, but unfortunately there are many areas of concern for New York state taxpayers. The new limits on state and local tax deductions will have a chilling effect on the state’s economy and the BCW urges Congress to continue to monitor this fluid situation.
- + The BCW continues to **support** the reauthorization of the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which provides an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students and strengthens the connections between secondary and postsecondary education.

*U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer gives an update to the BCW on the recently passed infrastructure funding bill.*

- Westchester County is home to more than a dozen colleges and universities who admit students who take advantage of financial aid provided by New York State and the federal government that, along with generous institutional aid, makes earning a degree more accessible. As Congress continues negotiations related to the Build Back Better Act and fy22 negotiations, the BCW **urges** them to double the maximum individual Pell Grant award to ensure that America's college students continue to have access to the college educations that will drive their successful futures and keep our country innovative, competitive, and economically thriving.
- The BCW is **opposed** to regulations now being considered by the U.S. Education Department and for which the current Negotiated Rule Making is underway that are directed toward continuing to unfairly and unjustifiably punish colleges in the proprietary sector for outcomes that are, in fact, better than those for many institutions in the public and private not-for-profit sectors. Among the punitive actions against proprietary sector colleges being proposed are those which will affect low income students' ability to receive maximum federal Pell Grant support and to reimpose the Obama era Gainful Employment regulations which many of the state's and nation's public sector and private

not-for-profit sector colleges would fail to meet if it were uniformly applied to all colleges. Holding all colleges in the proprietary sector accountable for the poor outcomes of some while ignoring the poor outcomes of public and private not-for-profit colleges is unfair and inequitably penalized the low-income, career-focused students served by this sector.

- The BCW **urges** Congress to pass the Ensuring Medicaid Continuity for Children in Foster Care Act (S.2689/H.R.5414). This legislation solves a pressing issue for children and youth in foster care in New York State regarding their continuing eligibility to receive Federal Financial Participation in Medicaid, an important step in ensuring the successful implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The legislation would exempt Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) from the federal IMD Medicaid exclusion to ensure that children and youth in foster care maintain eligibility for Federal Financial Participation in Medicaid and to ensure continuity of their health and behavioral health care. To continue prioritizing children's best interests, and to better achieve the goals of the FFPSA, it is essential that children and youth in QRTPs have continued, consistent federal support of their health care costs.



- The BCW **proposes** changing the federal poverty guideline (FPG) standards for several federal programs that base eligibility on these standards so that thousands of deserving individuals and families in Westchester and New York can access the programs' services. The FPG is a national standard, and thus currently fails to take into consideration the geographic, economic or demographic circumstances of each state. The BCW recommends that the federal government permit head start operators to apply for waivers to the FPG to align eligibility requirements for Head Start Programs to align with the local circumstances; recommends that the federal government will make 200 percent of the FPG permanent eligibility standard for all Community Services Block Grant participants; and with regards to the Weatherization Program, recommends that the federal government provide an opportunity for state and localities to apply for a waiver of up to 75 percent of the area's median income in order to bring more needy and deserving families closer to meeting the eligibility requirements.

- The debate over comprehensive immigration reform is ongoing. The BCW **advocates** that politics should not get in the way of common sense policy and urges the federal government to focus on reforms that protect our county's security, but not lose sight of the important role that immigrants have had, and continue to have, in creating economic prosperity for our country.
- The federal government remains uniquely positioned to provide additional resources to address mental health disparities in Westchester County that would benefit our workplaces, schools and the greater community. The BCW **supports** any initiative that focuses on supporting the mental health, well-being and efficacy of employees in our workplaces, students in our schools, and members of the larger community. To that end, we urge the Congress to continue to fund grants that will help equip mental health professionals with the clinical training and best practices they need to support members of our community. Since launching in 2017, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) have dramatically increased access to comprehensive, community-based mental health and addiction treatment. The BCW urges support for the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Expansion Act (S.2069/H.R. 4323), which would expand the CCBHC demonstration program by allowing



any state or territory to participate in the program. CCBHCs are crucial in ensuring that all people have timely access to high-quality and comprehensive behavioral health care.

+ The BCW **supports** investing in federal R&D programs that help businesses develop new technologies that then create new private sector jobs. Many of Westchester’s colleges and universities engage in federally funded research. It is essential that Congress continue to appropriate funds that would enable institutions of higher education to engage in basic and applied research, which spurs innovation and stimulates the economy.

- + **The BCW once again calls on Congress to reduce federal regulatory burdens to ease bureaucracy with which businesses and nonprofit organizations alike continue to struggle.**
- + The BCW **urges** the Congress to continue Congressionally Directed Spending to fund community-focused projects in Westchester County.
- + The BCW **urges** for additional funding for the STRANDED (Sensible, Timely Relief for America’s Nuclear Districts) Act to assist municipalities and localities with the loss of property tax revenue following the closure of an electric generating facility.

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