



## *2024 Legislative Agenda*



**James Schutzer** : CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

**Marsha Gordon** : PRESIDENT/CEO

**George Lence** : VICE CHAIR GOVERNMENTAL ACTION

**John Ravitz** : EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/COO

**Andra Horsch** : VICE PRESIDENT OF STATE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Government Action Council

Improved business climate .....	2
BCW's legislative agenda .....	2
Current challenges and priorities .....	3

### County

Remaining fiscally responsible .....	4
Coalition for Westchester Airport .....	6
WestchesterWorks program .....	6
Workforce development .....	7
Anti-racism, diversity and inclusion .....	7
Green Business Benchmark .....	8
Parks .....	9
Westchester Innovation Network .....	11

<b>State</b> .....	13
Economic development .....	18
Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts .....	23
Housing .....	26
Energy .....	28
Environment .....	32
Transportation .....	33
Child care .....	34
Healthcare .....	35
Mental health .....	37
Education .....	38
Higher education .....	40
<b>Federal</b> .....	41
<b>BCW Board of Directors</b> .....	45

### WHITE HOUSE

Joseph R. Biden Jr, *President*  
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. Michael Lawler

### NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Kathy Hochul, *Governor*  
Antonio Delgado, *Lt Governor*  
Thomas DiNapoli, *Comptroller*  
Letitia James, *Attorney General*

### STATE SENATE

34th S.D. Nathalia Fernandez  
35th S.D. Andrea Stewart-Cousins,  
*Majority Leader*  
36th S.D. Jamaal Bailey  
37th S.D. Shelley Mayer  
40th S.D. Peter Harchkham

### 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. MaryJane Shimsky  
93rd A.D. Chris Burdick  
94th A.D. Matt Slater  
95th A.D. Dana Levenberg

### 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,  
*Chairman*  
5th District Benjamin Boykin  
6th District Nancy E. Barr, *Vice Chairwoman*  
7th District Catherine Parker  
8th District Jewel Williams Johnson  
9th District Emiljana Ulaj  
10th District Judah Holstein  
11th District Terry Clements  
12th District David Imamura  
13th District Tyrae Woodson-Samuels  
14th District David J. Tubiolo  
15th District James Nolan  
16th District Shanae Williams  
17th District Jose Alvarado

### MAYORS

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



The Business Council of Westchester (BCW) is the county's largest and most prestigious business membership organization, representing more than 1,100 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 and CEO Marsha Gordon and BCW Board Chair Jamie Schutzer, Hall of Fame Co-Chairs Elizabeth Bracken-Thompson and Jim Giangrande, and the winners of the 2023 BCW Hall of Fame awards.

# 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

Each 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.



Members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators joined BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon and Executive Vice President/COO John Ravitz and event sponsors for the 2023 BCW Annual Board of Legislators Reception.

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, as well as all statewide elected officials, will receive a copy of the BCW's 2024 Legislative Agenda.

## CURRENT CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

In 2024, government at all levels will face critical challenges. The BCW will continue to be a strong voice for the Westchester business community. 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 members attended a working session with New York Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the Westchester Senate delegation during the BCW's 2023 Albany Lobby Day.

## REMAINING FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE

Westchester County will continue to face serious fiscal challenges in 2024. On the national level, concern about high interest rates and a possible recession is creating business uncertainties. In 2024, the BCW looks forward to continuing to work with Westchester County Executive George Latimer and with the members of the County Board of Legislators to promote economic development in Westchester County. In December 2023, the Board of Legislators voted and approved the county's 2024 \$2.4 billion 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, as this year's budget maintains the same county tax levy as 2023, marking the fifth consecutive year without a levy increase. Another longtime BCW goal is improving Westchester County's credit rating. Fitch Ratings has given the county a solid "AAA" credit rating. 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 2024. The BCW encourages all county municipalities to look to adopt programs that will offer a practical, manageable and viable approach to revitalize its local businesses while preserving the character and scale of their communities. To this end, local governments must continue to engage their citizens to be active and positive participants in this process that will only help Westchester's businesses move forward.

In 2023, 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 of 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' ability to create more jobs in Westchester County.

In 2024, the BCW will again remind the county government that Westchester prides itself on having a strong and 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 continues to re-emerge will not bring more permanent jobs to Westchester.

In 2024, 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 like-minded programs, will be critical to help the county encourage entrepreneurs to create businesses that will be part of the county's permanent workforce.



The 2023 Rising Stars class was honored by over 500 guests who attended the BCW's Rising Stars Celebration.



## THE BCW'S COALITION FOR WESTCHESTER AIRPORT

In 2024, 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 BCW'S WESTCHESTERWORKS PROGRAM

Four years ago, the BCW created a program called 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 Smart Development Working Group helped establish WestchesterWorks, a proactive approach to opening career paths. The effort is a collaboration among the BCW's real estate development members, Southern Westchester BOCES and Westhab, which will leverage its considerable community network to identify apprentices.

This program will be 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. The BCW will continue to urge Westchester County government, as well as other municipalities, to engage in an active partnership to support this program.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The BCW recognizes that having the appropriate talent to fill available jobs in Westchester is more important than ever to assist in the county's economy recovery. Over the past five years, many Westchester residents either voluntarily left the workforce or lost their jobs, and will be looking for new opportunities to rejoin the workforce. In 2024, 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, the BCW's 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 businesses and organizations. Over the last three years, the BCW has joined forces with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and

Westchester County Executive George Latimer speaking at the BCW's 2023 Annual Dinner.

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

In 2023, 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. In 2024, the BCW will continue to create meaningful programs on this important issue and continue to roll out resources that will support systemic change.

#### **THE BCW'S NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GREEN BUSINESS BENCHMARK**

The BCW has long been committed to sustainable business to protect the environment and as a tool for our members to engage employees, realize operations efficiencies and grow revenue through responsible corporate citizenship. To that end, the BCW launched its first Green Business program in 2009 through the Green Team Spirit and its evolution, the Green Business Partnership, which, during its tenure, grew into a state and national model for best practices.

In 2022, the BCW announced a collaboration with the Green Business Bureau, now Green Business Benchmark (GBB). In 2024, we are pleased to continue this commitment to bring GBB sustainability software management solutions to our members in a robust and meaningful way. With a national and state emphasis on clean energy, sustainability and climate solutions, businesses play a critical role in the success of a sustainable future. The GBB, a nationally trusted authority in green business practices and certification, envisions communities where every business is environmentally and socially responsible.



The Green Business Benchmark solution simplifies sustainability and takes the guesswork out of sustainability management. GBB helps businesses of all sizes quickly identify, prioritize and execute the most impactful initiative to meet their goals. A commitment to a green business results in increased operational efficiencies, revenue growth through an expanded customer base, higher productivity, and greater employee satisfaction and retention. GBB's EcoAssessment™ and EcoPlanner™ online tools enable businesses to implement and certify green initiatives and sustainable business practices. In addition, as a trusted third party, GBB provides a library of resources, online training, education, and an official green business seal for businesses to validate and promote their commitment and accomplishments.

The BCW looks forward to continuing its commitment to green business and sustainability, and bringing the GBB to its members in the coming year. You can learn more about the Green Business Benchmark at [greenbusinessbenchmark.com](https://greenbusinessbenchmark.com).

## **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 the community 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 to decide the location of their business.

Severe weather patterns have clearly demonstrated the urgent need for green infrastructure. 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 the resiliency of these open spaces to help protect countless numbers of private homes and businesses.



The iconic Westchester County Center will be 100 years old in 2030. It has served many purposes, and millions of residents and visitors over the decades. The BCW supports the county's effort to reimagine a new County Center for the next 100 years. Businesses and individuals should participate in all public opportunities to voice their ideas about how this unique event venue should be restored and used.

Additionally, continued progress in reducing the backlog of parks capital projects, particularly infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, continues to be a BCW goal. **In addition to keeping parks as safe and affordable as they can be for the ever-increasing number 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 to each other. Without private investment, these vital green spaces cannot be preserved at the 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.

The BCW also recognizes 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 not only good for the community and the people who live, work, and play here, but also provides great value to our businesses. To that end, the BCW supports an update to the Parks Master Plan which was last revised in 2002. This is a vital step to ensure that the needs of the entire Westchester community are considered in the future development of these priceless assets and encourages the county administration and the Board of Legislators to invest in this critical study.

BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon and BCW Board Chair Jamie Schutzer welcomed Westchester County Mayors Tom Roach, Noam Bramson, Mike Spano, Shawyn Patterson-Howard and Vivian McKenzie as the guest speakers at the BCW's Valley Bank Leadership Series.



---

## THE BCW'S WESTCHESTER INNOVATION NETWORK PROGRAM

Less than two years after its launch, the BCW's Westchester Innovation Network (WIN) program continues to generate success stories between innovators and their matches.

The BCW launched WIN in December 2021 to drive economic growth and development in Westchester County. By reaching out to innovative companies within Westchester and outside of the region and partnering with them, **WIN's goal is to integrate more innovation into our local businesses and municipalities.**

WIN launched with three components:

- ❶ The Innovation Match Program attracts innovators to Westchester and pairs them with leading local companies to test their services in real-world settings. The goals are to help local host companies better understand innovation and to provide feedback to innovators who seek product testing.
- ❷ The BCW City Labs Program spotlights a host community and teams with students from Iona University to identify innovative projects that will deliver immediate economic benefits to the municipality.
- ❸ The WIN Implementation Guide recommends policies to better attract and retain innovators, including funding, job training and incentives.

Far exceeding original projections, WIN's initial two years attracted over 40 local, national and international innovators who paired with local businesses to test commercially viable innovations. Among WIN's successes are Clarapath who partnered with Montefiore Hospital who worked to develop and market their SectionStar robotic device that automates the process of tissue cutting; EverFoam Products who partnered with DNK Events to further develop innovative environmentally friendly party décor; and Kells Dental who partnered with the Westchester Institute of Human Development and the YMCA CNW to further develop and test their innovative rapid oral screening technology.

The BCW City Labs program also delivered additional results this past year through the pairing of Iona University with the City of New Rochelle and the City of Peekskill to identify projects that deliver immediate economic benefits. Students met with City Officials, the community, and small business owners in order to successfully bring innovation and technology into each of the cities.

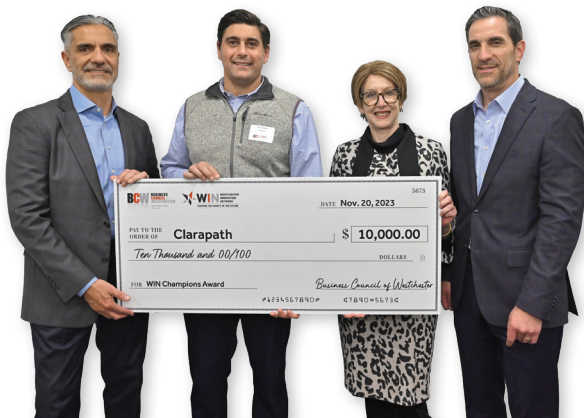


The second WIN year has closed with the completion of the WIN Implementation Guide with the assistance of Iona University and Laurier University and the establishment of new international partnerships in order to attract new and exciting innovations to Westchester in 2024.

ABOVE: BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon, BCW Board Chair Jamie Schutzer, and Luiz Aragon, the coordinator of the BCW's Westchester Innovation Network (WIN) Program, present Dr. Joseph Ricca, the superintendent of White Plains schools and White Plains High School faculty and students, an award of \$2,500 at the BCW's 2023 Business Showcase Celebration.

RIGHT: Marsha Gordon, Jamie Schutzer and Luiz Aragon awarded Traci Jones, the founder of EverFoam, an award of \$5,000.

BELOW: Marsha Gordon, Jamie Schutzer and Luiz Aragon awarded Eric Feinstein, founder of Clarapath, an award of \$10,000.



New York State faces many challenges this year, and the Governor and the State Legislature must work together to prioritize programs and policies that will maintain New York State's competitiveness, as well as **bring back and create new jobs as a means of bringing in more revenue to enhance the state's economic climate**. We also recognize that New York State will have to responsibly address the fiscal ramifications of the ongoing migrant challenges.

Last year, the BCW's annual Albany Lobby Day was once again held in-person at the State Capitol, where we met with Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and members of the Westchester delegation. Throughout the 2023 legislative session, the BCW was actively engaged. Countless 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. 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 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, and we look forward to continuing to work with her and her administration. New York State still faces many challenges and we stand ready to work closely with her as she continues to promote economic development, job creation and housing initiatives in Westchester and across the state.

In 2024, the BCW urges the State Legislature to:

- ✓ **Award** a downstate full gaming license that will allow Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts to achieve its potential as a full-scale commercial casino. This continues to be the **BCW's top legislative priority**, and the BCW urges the expedited awarding of the available casino licenses to assist the state's recovery which will bring much-needed jobs, investment and revenue into the region.

- ✓ **Oppose** legislation that would ban all non-compete agreements in New York State. Many of Westchester County's employers rely on non-compete agreements with their senior employees to protect their intellectual property, proprietary information and client relationships for some period during which they are prepared to compensate covered employees. Similarly, parties that are acquiring a business or business interests rely on non-compete provisions as a condition of the transaction. If this legislation becomes law, it will disrupt generations of business practices that are deemed essential to protect the intellectual property and proprietary interests of employers and to maintain a vibrant and innovative economy in New York. The Governor vetoed this legislation in 2023 and we will be working again this year to prevent its passage.
- ✓ **Reject** Antitrust legislation (S.6748) 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 antitrust laws, 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.** The BCW will continue its work with a statewide coalition of organizations which was a strong advocate in defeating this legislation in 2022 and 2023.
- ✓ **Oppose** the All-Electric Building Act (S.562A/A.920A) that would prohibit the construction of new buildings that are not all-electric. The BCW is most concerned about reliability issues and costs. While the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act continues to move forward and sets ambitious targets for the state to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, we do not have the renewable energy infrastructure in place yet to meet reliability concerns.
- ✓ **Reject** the Tax the Rich agenda that would increase taxes for many New Yorkers. The agenda includes bills to implement: a new progressive income tax structure for high income payers; a capital gains tax; an heir's tax; a mark to market tax; a stock transfer tax; and additional taxes on certain business income included in an individuals' taxable income.

- ✓ **Oppose any new costly mandates on businesses.** As we look to recruit and retain businesses in New York State, it is imperative that the Legislature refrain from passing legislation that imposes costly unfunded mandates on businesses that create an unnecessary layer of regulation that will merely serve as a burden to already struggling businesses across the state. 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.
- ✓ **Oppose** workers' compensation bills that would result in higher costs and premiums for all New York state businesses — especially small businesses — at a time when they are contending with unrelenting economic challenges, including widespread inflation, supply chain issues, extensive labor shortages, and excessive unemployment insurance costs.
- ✓ **Oppose** legislation that seeks to create a new class of damages awardable in wrongful death lawsuits. This legislation would have a disastrous impact on businesses in the state, endangering our economic recovery. This bill would radically expand the kinds of damages recoverable in wrongful death actions, driving up liability insurance premiums for public and private entities across the state. Liability insurance premiums are already higher in New York than almost anywhere else in the country. This bill would make it harder to attract new companies and discourage local entrepreneurs from pursuing their goals and remaining in New York. The BCW was pleased that the Governor vetoed this bill in 2023.
- ✓ **Oppose** legislation that would require certain companies and corporations to report certain data regarding the gender, race, and ethnicity of their employees. The BCW opposes this bill as being unnecessary, since it is duplicative of Executive Order 162 and establishes another mandate on businesses by requiring substantially similar information contained in the Employer Information Report EEO-1 be filed with the New York Secretary of State. This legislation was vetoed by the Governor last year and we will be advocating against its passage again this year.



New York State Governor Kathy Hochul was the guest of honor at the BCW's 2023 Annual Dinner.

- ✓ **Sunset** the COVID Sick Leave mandate in this year's budget, as the logistical challenges and the cost of this outdated law can no longer be overlooked. The initial legislation was signed into law at the peak of the pandemic in March 2020, guaranteeing paid leave benefits for New Yorkers because of COVID-related mandatory and precautionary orders of quarantine or isolation. New York, unlike other states, continues to maintain this law that mandates an additional minimum of five days of paid sick leave per quarantine period (up to 14 paid sick leave days per quarantine period for large employers). With the worst of COVID behind us, readily available and effective vaccines and COVID treatments, paid leave requirements must sunset.
- ✓ **Increase** funding for vital programs that provide much needed food for hungry New Yorkers. In 2024, the BCW will be working with Feeding Westchester to advocate for \$75 million for the Nourish New York Program, \$64 million for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), and legislation (S.7663A/A.6214A) to raise the SNAP minimum benefit to \$100 per month. These vital programs support hungry New Yorkers, food relief organizations and New York farmers.
- ✓ **Support** tax reforms to reduce compliance costs for New York-based employers.
- ✓ **Reform** the Scaffold Law in the FY 2025 State Budget. This continues to be one of the major legislative priorities for the BCW in 2024. 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 dollars a year in education budgets across the state.
- ✓ **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

BCW members Cindy Delfino, Wendy Wollner, BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon and BCW Board Chair Jamie Schutzer with Assemblyman Matt Slater at the BCW's 2023 Albany Lobby Day.



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 with 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.

- ✓ **Continue** to create enhanced tax credits for small businesses, and adopt new small business tax reform policies to assist small businesses which are vital to the health and well-being of our communities.
- ✓ **Continue** to pass amendments to help bolster the state's Minority and Women's Business Enterprises program, streamline the application process, enhance opportunities and encourage greater participation.
- ✓ **Pass** yearly on-time budgets in the light of day. The passing of the state budget should not occur in the middle of the night. 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 (A.455) 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 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 that the Governor vetoed this bill in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development programs and policies will continue to 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 foster 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. The BCW was pleased that the Governor's FY 2025 Executive Budget included \$880 million for economic development, including \$225 million for a new round of REDC awards. The BCW is optimistic that this program will receive funding in the final budget and make its way to communities in Westchester County. Most recently, and among others, the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester was awarded \$100,000 for the replacement and installation of a new HVAC system; the S.I.C. Film School in Yonkers received \$450,000 to remodel a portion of the North Broadway Armory to create a state-of-the-art film school in downtown Yonkers; and \$100,000 was awarded to the Rye YMCA in Port Chester, who in collaboration with Rye Presbyterian Church, will open a new child care center by constructing seven classrooms for infants and children.
- ✓ The BCW emphatically **supports** legislation to lower Unemployment Insurance (UI) taxes and to allocate state and federal funds to restore the UI system, and was disappointed this was not addressed in the Governor's FY 2025 Budget. The private sector shed more than 1.7 million jobs in March 2020, driving unemployment from 4.4% to 16.2%. 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. In July 2023, businesses were once again notified that they would continue to take on the state's interest debt payment. Replenishing the UI Trust Fund should not and cannot solely fall on the backs of New York employers for actions mandated by state government, which have already suffered immense financial harm.
- ✓ The BCW continues to **oppose** prevailing wage legislation. Six years ago, the BCW formed its Smart Development Working Group

that is comprised of Westchester's most prominent developers in response to legislation to



New York Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins joined BCW Executive Vice President/COO John Ravitz at a roundtable discussion on critical housing issues with the BCW Smart Development Working Group.

require the payment of prevailing wages on private construction projects receiving any form of state funding support. While this legislation ultimately passed, **we need to be mindful of additional prevailing wage legislation that may be introduced**, including (S.5868/A.7491) that could further increase the cost of private construction projects that bring new residents, new jobs and new opportunities to Westchester County. This legislation would specifically make both overall eligibility for the state's brownfield program and eligibility for the program's redevelopment credit for tangible property investments contingent on a project sponsor paying public works prevailing wage for all remedial project-related construction work. This, in turn, would impose higher project costs on brownfield cleanup projects, thereby acting simply as a deterrent to undertaking these types of projects.

- ✓ The BCW, along with its Smart Development Working Group, appreciated the 2022 extension and strengthening of the Brownfield Clean Up Program that incentivizes private-sector redevelopment of contaminated brownfield sites across the state, but **urges** the Governor and State Legislature to make additional amendments to the program so that more sites can be developed, including extending the time that projects can draw down the qualified tax credits as many larger projects take a longer time to be developed.
- ✓ The BCW **supports** legislation (A.5758) to provide relief to contractors who have sustained unanticipated expenses by reason of construction materials price escalations. The legislation would allow contractors who hold contracts with the state and public benefit corporations who experienced cost increases in excess of 5% for materials that were purchased or invoiced after March 1, 2020, related to contracts for which they submitted bids before April 1, 2020, are eligible to apply for an adjustment to their contract to recoup the increased material costs. Construction material cost increases have been notable as prices have risen. The BCW was disappointed that the Governor vetoed this bill in 2022 and urges her to give contractors and subcontractors the assistance they need.

- ✓ The BCW **supports** the reauthorization of \$200 million for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and the NY Forward Programs. Many municipalities in Westchester County have already benefited from receiving DRI funding and we hope that more municipalities will be able to access this program that transforms downtown neighborhoods into vibrant centers. Likewise with the NY Forward Program, this program will help assist developers as we look towards more development in the County.
- ✓ The BCW **supports** the reauthorization of \$200 million for the Fast New York Program that was formally launched in December 2022 to facilitate the development of shovel-ready sites across the state. 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.
- ✓ 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 supporting IDA sales tax exemptions and pilot programs with local towns to incentivize in-state investments and job creation; and opposing legislation (S.6746/A.8121) 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; and opposing legislation (S.89/A.351) that would prevent IDAs from offering a PILOT on school taxes which would lead to IDAs losing projects and ultimately less jobs, less economic activity and less revenue generated for not only school districts, but local municipalities as well. These two bills 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 continues to **oppose** the Securing Wages Earned Against Theft (SWEAT) bill (S.1977/A.46) that would allow employees to place a lien on an employer's personal property based on a claim of wage and hour violations. This legislation would be unjustifiably 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 **supports** the expansion of high-quality and affordable broadband access for all New York State residents. 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. 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. Overall, the 5G investments are expected to generate 3 million new jobs, \$500 billion in GDP growth, and \$275 billion in investments nationwide. The wireless industry in New York is responsible for more than 193,000 jobs and nearly \$28.2 billion in GDP. To meet the challenges ahead, we will need a next generation 5G wireless network.
- ✓ Westchester County has played a positive role in engaging production companies to shoot films and TV series throughout the county. The film industry in Westchester County generated over \$1.1 billion of economic activity in 2021, supported 3,784 jobs and nearly \$356.8 million in wages. The BCW **supports** incentives to continue this momentum and was pleased that last year's final budget increased



BCW members Shirley Buontempo, Cherese Jervis-Hill and Susan Fox with Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg at the BCW's 2023 Albany Lobby Day.

the annual funding cap of the state's film tax credits to \$700 million starting in tax year 2024, and reduced the number of seasons that a relocated television series must be filmed outside New York prior to its first relocated season in New York to be eligible for the credits. This is an important tourism victory because without the increase, New York State would continue to lose this business to surrounding states.

- ✓ The BCW continues to **support** the hospitality industry. Following the challenging period surrounding the pandemic, **Westchester visitor spending reached \$2 billion in 2022 and Westchester represented 43% of all visitor spending** in the Hudson Valley region, significantly contributing to New York State's visitor volumes and spending that year. In fact, in 2022, Westchester saw a 99% recovery from the pandemic loss. It is imperative that New York State continues to support this industry that has proven to generate revenue to municipalities and, in many cases, has served as an incubator for workforce development. In 2024, the BCW will be working with the Westchester Hotel Association to:
- ✓ **Support** legislation (S.885B/A.4130A) to regulate Short Term Rentals (STRs). 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.
- ✓ **Support** Americans with Disabilities Act Website legislation (S.920/A.1684) to 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.

Assemblyman Harry Bronson with BCW Government Action Council Chair George Lence, BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon, BCW Board Chair Jamie Schutzer, BCW Board Member Maria Trusa and Vice President for State Government Affairs Andra Horsch at the BCW 2023 Albany Lobby Day.



BCW Executive Vice President/COO John Ravitz, Vice President for State Government Affairs Andra Horsch and senior officials of the Westchester Hotel Association attended meetings at the State Capitol with the Westchester State Legislative delegation.



- ✓ **Support** adequate funding for Tourism Promotion Matching Funds to provide much needed support for tourism promotion agencies.
- ✓ **Oppose** legislation (S.62222/A.4095) that would mandate lodging facilities to set their air conditioners to specific temperatures. The BCW opposes this bill that seeks to micro-manage the operations of lodging facilities across New York State. While the intent of this legislation, to conserve energy, is admirable it sets a dangerous precedent and restricts a lodging facilities ability to operate their business as they see fit.
- ✓ **Oppose** legislation (S.2560/A.737) 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 is subject to circumstances of which they have no control.
- ✓ **Oppose** legislation (S.4776) that states 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.

## **EMPIRE CITY CASINO BY MGM RESORTS**

**There is consensus across the county: Empire City Casino will deliver for New York – if the state makes the right decision.**

New York State needs to focus on strong and equitable economic growth and job creation to strengthen our communities and restore the opportunity and promise undermined by challenging economic times and global health challenges. While progress has been made to revitalize our communities across Westchester County and the region, economic development remains at a crawl, and smart



development through private investments are sorely needed. Albany has taken decisive action as part of its effort to address this need by creating a path to issue the three remaining commercial casino licenses, but when decisions are made, Westchester County must be prioritized.



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 one of the

largest private employers in New York's third largest city, boasting an annual payroll of over \$80 million and more than 1,000 employees prior to the pandemic, Empire City – acquired by MGM Resorts in January 2019 – is integral to the economic growth of the county, region and state.

**Empire City Casino generates over \$300 million in tax revenue each year to fund state education, and millions more for state and local government coffers.**

After years of advocacy efforts, the Executive and State Legislature adopted a state budget in 2021 that included authorization for the Gaming Commission to conduct a competitive process to award the three remaining full-gaming casino licenses downstate. The process, however, needs to move forward. Once proposals are in hand, local review boards will evaluate each one before the Governor-appointed Gaming Facility Location Board (GFLB) will have the opportunity to select up to three sites based on a number of factors, including the financial strength of the applicants, the proposed location of the casinos, and the impact the casinos would have on the surrounding communities. While other developers and gaming companies will submit applications for consideration during this competitive process, MGM Resorts must be the leading candidate, given its unmatched experience, thoughtful development plans and essential role as an important economic engine for our region.

Over 70 small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and labor groups from across Westchester and the Bronx, stand firmly united in the belief that **Empire City, backed by MGM Resorts' global expertise, is uniquely positioned to generate thousands of family-sustaining, union jobs and stimulating vital economic activity, all while prioritizing equity and inclusion.**

The development outlined by MGM Resorts seamlessly aligns with the economic development goals of Westchester County. It includes a 5,000-capacity entertainment venue that will significantly increase the cultural and entertainment offerings available to residents while attracting new visitors. This state-of-the-art venue, the first of its kind in our area, will bolster tourism and catalyze urgently needed economic activity. This would result in an anticipated 13,000 jobs for Westchester and the Bronx, including Empire City directly hiring 2,000 new 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 be a lifeline for so many families and small businesses, generate significant and immediate new revenue for the state through license fees, and bring investment to help communities like Yonkers, Mount Vernon and the Bronx, which were among the hardest hit by the economic downturn.

MGM Resorts has invested \$850 million in acquiring Empire City Casino, millions more in investments to date, and is prepared to invest significantly 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, entertainment venue, and exciting dining amenities. As a commercial casino, Empire City will recapture the gaming and entertainment revenues currently flowing from New York to neighboring states like New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.

Failing to select Empire City for one of the downstate licenses would be devastating to our communities and the thousands of families who rely on the family-sustaining union jobs at Empire City. Simply put, Empire City cannot survive as a VLT-only facility in a region where it is at a competitive disadvantage to nearby commercial casinos.

The available casino licenses must be awarded on an expedited basis in order to unlock the jobs and economic impact that the region and state desperately need. New York can't afford to wait years before awarding the casino licenses that will jumpstart the economic engines of our communities. Empire City enjoys overwhelming community and local political support, making it best positioned to recapture the entertainment dollars and jobs New York continues to lose to neighboring states. The time to turbocharge our economic comeback is now.

## HOUSING

The need for affordable housing is again at the forefront of this year's legislative session. Governor Hochul has made the chronic shortage of affordable housing that is hindering economic growth and new business investment one of her signature issues. The BCW strongly supports her efforts and is committed to working closely with her and the Legislature to see these vital initiatives implemented. **The BCW will continue to play a leadership role through its Smart Development Working Group**, and we are happy to once again provide the Governor and the Legislature with the expertise of our members who have a proven track record of getting things done in the housing arena.

In 2024, the BCW will:

- ✓ **Advocate** that the creation of **more housing will not move forward if additional requirements and burdens are placed upon projects.**

Market conditions have changed, and the world of today is vastly different than the world of 2019. The development of new market rate housing is now incredibly challenging due to inflation and elevated interest rates. Recognizing the urgent need to create more housing supply to ensure affordability and maintain the competitiveness of Westchester County, the BCW is working with its Smart Development Working Group and will be submitting a report to the Governor and the Legislature that will compare the development costs of a multifamily project in 2019 to the development costs of today. We will utilize this report to urge State and County governments to lessen mandates and burdens to create more housing that is desperately needed in this state.

- ✓ **Advocate** for legislation (S.6544) to formally authorize IDAs to support the state's housing goals. Over the past five years, IDAs have supported over 400 projects with a residential component, creating over 36,000 new units and more than 9000 affordable housing units. While IDAs have the authority to support commercial housing projects based on court precedent and a 2015 Office of the State Comptroller opinion, many IDAs are still hesitant to support housing projects because the current database does not track housing starts and only quantifies jobs created/retained vs tax dollars abated. To help solve the state's housing crisis, the state must formally clarify the authority of industrial development agencies to engage in the development of housing projects. In addition, short-term construction jobs for new multifamily housing creates permanent service-sector jobs and increased economic activity.

✓ **Support** the establishment of the Housing Access Voucher Program (S.568B/A.4021A) which would provide rental assistance in the form of vouchers to individuals who face an imminent risk of losing their homes. These vouchers would be a critical safety net for tenants who need it the most. They would shore up



at-risk tenants who are suffering financial hardship and income, and those who meet the definition of rent burdened as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The vouchers would be paid directly to the property owner and make up the difference between what the tenant or family could reasonably pay—30% of their income. This is a truly win-win policy. It directly helps those at risk, without requiring the property owner to assume all the costs or force these costs to be absorbed by other market-rate tenants within the building.

✓ **Oppose** Good Cause Eviction legislation (S.305/A.4454) that 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 would fall and tenants would not be able to find good, affordable apartments.

✓ **Oppose** 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.

---

## ENERGY

One of the BCW's top priorities is to address Westchester County's changing energy landscape. The Indian Point Energy Center, the provider of approximately 25% of our region's electricity, ceased operations on April 30, 2021. In addition, a natural gas moratorium remained in place for four years in the southern section of Westchester County.

On December 19, 2022, the state-appointed Climate Action Council (CAC) issued its final scoping plan outlining how New York will transform its energy supply systems. It is impossible to overstate the impact of the program's mandate that by 2040, just seventeen years from now, 100% of our electricity will be required to come from renewable power sources.

The BCW has actively followed the push to impose a hard deadline on the cutoff of fossil fuel solutions. We have carefully assessed the impacts — both economic and personal — it will have on every aspect of life in New York. No business sector will be unaffected if fossil fuels are prematurely banned. The BCW remains deeply concerned about the unintended, but inevitable consequences of setting a self-imposed deadline.

The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) implementation sets several ambitious targets – 70% of New York's electricity must come from renewable sources by 2030, the power generation sector must be completely decarbonized by 2040, and the state must achieve 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 the 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.
- ✓ There may not be consistent funding to support the creation of the renewable infrastructure that needs to be created.

Given these concerns, the BCW joined with other New York State business organizations 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 would have been instrumental to the CAC in developing its draft Scoping Plan. Unfortunately, the CAC released its plan without conducting the statewide cost analysis.

**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 not a role for natural gas 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 with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and the Public Service Commission to explore these issues; and also previously raised **reliability and cost 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 Conference to apprise Westchester's business community on the many energy programs that are available to assist them.**

The BCW will continue to ask 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.

The BCW strongly urges Governor Hochul and the State Legislature to begin the process of having honest conversations with all stakeholders statewide on how we can achieve the goals to ensure New York has a strong and reliable energy plan in place. Those conversations must

stress that the state has a long way to go to create the renewable energy infrastructure that is needed to support the state's power grid, and that natural gas will be required to support the system until the renewable energy infrastructure is in place.

It is imperative that New York continues to attract and retain businesses to keep our economy strong. This means demonstrating that **we have a clear, smart, and secure energy delivery plan in place now and in the future**. Achieving this will require a tremendous amount of work, mutual understanding, and cooperation on everyone's part. It's not an option, and the time to begin is now.

Additionally, the BCW opposes the Governor's 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 2024:

### Development of Battery Electric Storage Systems

The BCW supports the vital development of Battery Electric Storage Systems in Westchester County. As we move to a power system more reliant on renewable energy sources, new battery investments are necessary to maintain grid reliability and to ensure the ability to meet the demand for power at all times.

### Develop and Construct New Electric Car Infrastructure



Of the total greenhouse gas emissions in New York City, 24% 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.2618) to establish the New York State Renewable Reclamation Projects Program for the development of renewable electric generation projects, as New York State's goal to generate 50% of its electricity from renewables by 2030 requires a momentous effort.

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

The BCW supports legislation (S.1179/A.7269) 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.

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

The BCW urges the need 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% 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.

## ENVIRONMENT

The BCW was pleased that the \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022 was approved by New York State voters, as it represents the largest environmental bond act in state history and will support projects related to the environment, natural resources and water infrastructure, as well as projects classified



as climate change mitigation. **The BCW urges that these funds be deployed expeditiously** and that opportunities for project funding are maximized through recent federal funding streams from the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

In 2024,

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ The BCW **supports** legislation (S.1292/A.964) 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.
- ✓ The BCW **opposes** legislation (including S.237B and A.6353) that seeks to expand the bottle deposit law by expanding the types of beverages that would be included; by increasing the bottle deposit amount to ten cents per container; and by increasing the per container handling fee paid by a deposit initiator to a deposit redeemer from 3.5 to 6 cents. The BCW is concerned that the increase in the volume of redemptions will significantly increase the compliance burden placed on the retail sector.

- ✓ The BCW **opposes** the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (S.4246A/A.5322A) that would restrict the sale of plastic packaging and one-use products, and require source reductions of all packaging types. In doing so, the bill disregards practical considerations and will adversely impact consumer choices and costs.

## TRANSPORTATION

The BCW advocates that the state needs to prioritize where critical and limited transportation 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 to 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 is concerned that funding levels proposed in the Governor's FY 2025 budget for the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) capital program do not meet the needs of the system, as 10 out of 11 NYSDOT regions have seen an unprecedented decline in bridge conditions year over year and more than 42% of the roads on the NYSDOT system are in fair or poor condition (in 2017, that number stood at just 25%). Spending on core NYSDOT capital needs has actually decreased and is being decimated by record inflation and material cost escalation. The impact of the 20%+ bite that inflation has taken out of the spending power of the capital program has essentially consumed an entire year of the 5-year program.



To combat this, the BCW joins the Associated General Contractors of New York State and our other infrastructure coalition partners, which includes 40 organizations from the construction industry, business, organized labor, local governments, and minority and women-owned businesses, in advocating for at least an additional \$400M for core highway construction. This is needed just to keep funding at a similar level from when the five-year program was initially adopted in 2022 and

will help address the inflationary impact on the program. Inaction will mean a continued decline in conditions, which has negative implications for all of us.

## CHILD CARE

Working with the Child Care Council of Westchester, the BCW has been a constant proponent of ensuring that child care is a priority on all levels of government. Working parents, particularly women, depend on the availability of affordable, quality child care in order to work. The lifeline of federal resources provided between 2021 to 2023 allowed states to invest in child care, making the system work more effectively for families and early education professionals. New York State took advantage of this opportunity by increasing the income eligibility levels for families seeking financial assistance, providing retention and recruitment grants to child care programs and more. However, without additional federal investment, these efforts and improvements cannot be sustained.

In the 2022 budget, Westchester County Executive George Latimer and the Board of Legislators funded child care at an unprecedented level, acknowledging the pivotal role this resource would play in a robust and enduring economic recovery for our county. This included establishment of the Westchester Works Child Care Scholarship Program. In the 2024

County budget, they re-funded the program and increased income eligibility levels to include families who earn up to 500% of the Federal Poverty Level, which will enable many more families in Westchester to access affordable child care.



However, there is growing concern that we are inching closer

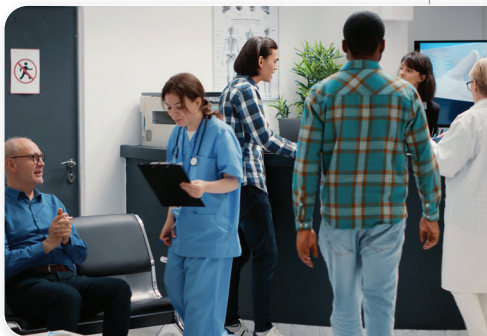
to another child care crisis that will have significant consequences for our workforce and economy if not addressed expeditiously. While other industries with low-wage-earning workers have raised wages and improved benefits on a permanent basis, the child care sector has only been able to do so temporarily. This makes it difficult to attract and retain qualified early educators, and often passes those costs on to parents. As a result, parents are priced out of the child care market and child care programs do not have enough staff to operate at capacity, making the limited remaining spots even more expensive.

The BCW urges the State Legislature to adopt the Universal Child Care Act with the needed funding and adopt a sustained child care workforce compensation fund as a step toward parity with comparable jobs in the K-12 public education system. This is how we ensure that children and families have access to the child care they need, employers can avoid child care-related disruptions, and states can sustain and build upon the improvements they've enacted over the past three years.

## HEALTHCARE

Healthcare workforce shortages continue to grow in virtually every county in New York State. The nursing shortage in New York State and across the country is well documented, and we continue to see an

exodus of health care professionals leaving their respective fields due to retirement, burnout or the pursuit of other careers. **One of the biggest contributors to nursing shortages is the declining number of educators who can train the next generation.** A survey by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing indicates the vacancy rate for faculty positions increased from 6.5% in 2020 to 8% in 2021 and to 8.8% in 2022. The Association reports that U.S. nursing schools turned away more than 91,938 qualified applicants for nursing programs in 2021-2022, mostly because of faculty shortages.



The BCW has advocated for the Clinical Preceptor Tax Credit Act (S.2067/A.2230) since 2017. This bill would establish a personal income tax credit for community-based healthcare professionals such as nurses and physician assistants, among others, who serve as preceptors, providing New York State-required clinical training for students studying to enter various health care professions. Currently, schools need to cap their incoming classes, as they only have a limited number of slots available based on the number of preceptors they have available. Thus, many prospective students are not be able to enter into health care programs. In effect, this bill seeks to incentivize community-based health care professionals to serve as preceptors so that students can complete their state-mandated clinical training. Five states have enacted similar legislation, and five other states have proposed similar legislation. Now is the time for New York State to pass this much-needed legislation.

Additionally, in 2024 the BCW will:

- ✓ Continue to **oppose** any attempt to create a single-payer health insurance system in New York State, including the New York Health Program (S.7590/A.7897). The cost to implement this program 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% of its residents under a combination of private and public health plans. The New York Health Program would result in the largest state tax increase in the history of the U.S. 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.
- ✓ Work with the Burke Neurological Institute located in White Plains in **advocating** for a \$10 million funding increase (for a total of \$18.5 million) in FY 2025 for the New York Spinal Cord Injury Research Program (SCIRP). The \$25 surcharge from the SCIRP Program generates an estimated \$200 million in revenue for the state each year, of which only \$8.5 million per year (<5%) is devoted to SCIRP, which seeks to catalyze research for spinal cord injury. The SCIRP program has not seen a funding increase since 1998, and the additional \$10 million would reflect the cost of medical inflation since the program's inception and index the fund to the rate of medical inflation going forward. SCIRP provides high-tech jobs and investment in the state's educational institutions where researchers have already developed effective treatments today and are working for tomorrow's cure.
- ✓ **Support** legislation (S.4020B/A.3392B) to recognize the vital role Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provides to ensure the health and well-being of communities across New York. This legislation deems general ambulance service to be an "essential service" that must be provided in every area of the state.
- ✓ Continue to **educate** the business community on all aspects of the New York Health Exchange, including what tax credits are available for employers who offer health insurance to their employees.

- ✓ 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 BCW **supports** Governor Hochul's FY 2025 budget proposal to fund New York's behavioral health system by raising state investment by 45%, from \$3.3 billion in 2022 to \$4.8 billion over the entire continuum of care to drastically reduce the number of individuals with unmet behavioral health needs in Westchester County.

**Timely access to the right behavioral health services at the right time remains of paramount concern**, both for those with Commercial Behavioral Health Insurance and those with Medicaid Managed Care/ Publicly Supported Health Insurance. Significant drivers of today's access challenges include a hollowed-out workforce and not enough supply to meet the current demand. The long-standing challenge of under investment in the Behavioral Health sector has resulted in an underpaid and overworked Behavioral Health workforce (i.e. Social Workers, Psychologists, and Psychiatrists) at a point of unprecedented demand. Commercial Behavioral Health Insurance providers are reimbursing provider organizations at 50% of the Medicaid rate for comparable services. Due to the low rates of reimbursement, the Behavioral Health provider community is opting out of accepting Commercial Insurance clients entirely or making the difficult decision of shuttering their facilities, leaving individuals and families with few, if any, options to access needed Behavioral Health care.



Assemblymembers MaryJane Shimsky and J. Gary Pretlow and legislative staff at a tour of BCW member Andrus' campus in Yonkers.

The BCW joins Andrus in **supporting** Behavioral Health Parity by eliminating copays and deductibles in accessing Behavioral Health care; and joins Andrus and the Mental Health Association of Westchester in supporting Behavioral Health Parity by:

- ✓ Requiring commercial insurers to pay at least Medicaid APG rates, which would reduce the dramatic disparity between Commercial and Medicaid Insurance reimbursement rates for comparable behavioral health services and re-base all rates to reflect the actual costs of providing care.
- ✓ Requiring Commercial Insurance payers to cover Child and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS). New York needs to close the gap in services available to children and families utilizing Commercial Insurance vs those utilizing Medicaid Managed Care. Requiring all insurers to cover CFTSS and other community-based Behavioral Health services is a crucial step in reducing the reliance on higher-cost Acute Care facilities.
- ✓ Funding a 3.2% COLA for the Behavioral Health and Human Services workforce.

## EDUCATION

Preparing New York State's students to acquire the skills needed to attend college and/or to prepare them to enter the workforce continues to be a top priority for the BCW. **We must never lose sight of the ultimate goals, which include: better graduation rates, college matriculation and completion rates, career placement, family-sustaining wages, and greater civic engagement.**

The BCW also **advocates** for:

- ✓ Legislation to provide an annual growth amount for tuition and regional rate reimbursement for approved school-age and preschool

New York State Governor Kathy Hochul receiving the BCW's 2023 Global Leadership Laureate Award from BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon and BCW Board Chair Jamie Schutzer at the BCW's 2023 Annual Dinner.



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:** Create an expense-based aid for student mental health services or contractual services provided in a school setting; provide behavioral health providers with ongoing cost of living increases to meet the growing demand of students and families in need of mental health services; continue to support provision of universal school meals for all community-eligible school districts; and ensure additional flexible resources for school safety, including funding for staffing, security upgrades, and training.
- ✓ **Mandate Relief and Transparency:** A thorough review of existing mandates and increased transparency prior to the enactment of new mandates would assist school districts in managing the significant cost burdens of compliance. In the current inflationary environment, reducing requirements on school districts would assist with cost control when prices are expected to continue to rise; 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 lastly, establish an Education Mandate Relief Redesign Team.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

BCW is proud that all the colleges in Westchester County are members of our organization, and we support them as they educate and train our future employees. 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), which is in its 50th year, by increasing the minimum and maximum awards; permitting graduate students to participate in it; increasing the number of semesters for TAP eligibility; making the program available in the summer and winter sessions; modifying the salary eligibility threshold to at least \$125,000; and increasing the number of semesters for TAP eligibility. The BCW also urges the Legislature to expand the part-time assistance program to include students attending proprietary colleges; and to eliminate the disparity in access to TAP awards by standardizing dependent and independent student TAP award schedules.

The State Legislature must also modify the Enhanced Tuition Awards Program to attract additional participants by removing government-imposed caps on tuition charges and residency and employment requirements. The Legislature must also maintain and increase funding for 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. The BCW supports the Board of Regents proposal for a \$13 million increase to support enhanced services across all sectors of higher education, including the proprietary sector; and supports the inclusion of all degree granting colleges and universities in Early College High School and P-TECH Programs,

including the proprietary sector. And lastly, the BCW opposes legislation (S.7797/A.8478) that would allow for the repeal or alteration of real property exemptions for nonprofit colleges, as this sets a very dangerous precedent that colleges cannot afford.



The BCW thanks Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and the members of the Westchester Congressional Delegation who continue to work tirelessly to ensure that New York State



receives the necessary federal dollars to fund countless programs and projects that are important to Westchester County and the rest of the state. **As these monies are allocated, it is critical that the New York delegation works to ensure that New York gets its fair share** to grow its economy, create new jobs, recruit and retain businesses and residents.

With a divided Congress, the BCW is also hopeful that members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives will recognize that there is still much work to be done, and come together to enact bipartisan legislation that will positively impact Westchester residents and businesses.

Last year, the BCW visited Washington, DC for a two-day trip to meet with members of the Westchester Congressional delegation and to receive a briefing from the leadership at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The BCW advocated for many of its top federal priorities and looks forward to working with the delegation on the following issues in 2024:

- ✓ The BCW has consistently **urged** Congress to adopt common-sense tax reform to simplify the process and lower rates for businesses and individuals. 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 BCW **urges** Congress to pass the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act. This act from the Chairs of the House Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees restores critical pro-growth tax provisions supporting domestic R&D, interest deductibility and full expensing through 2025. It is crucial that Congress pass these pro-growth tax provisions that have enabled U.S. businesses to innovate, create good paying jobs, protect our national security and remain at the cutting edge of the global economy. Restoring these provisions will have a profound impact on business investment, economic growth, and job creation.

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Westchester County is home to more than a dozen colleges and universities that 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. The BCW **applauds** the United States Senate and House of Representatives on historic and record-setting investments made to the Pell Grant program in the 117th Congress, and urges members of Westchester's Congressional delegation to continue prioritizing the Pell Grant program, raising the maximum individual award to \$13,000 to ensure that America's college students continue to have access to a college education that will drive their successful futures, and keep our country innovative, competitive, and economically thriving.
- ✓ The BCW **urges** the need for additional investments in child care. The lifeline of federal resources provided between 2021 to 2023 allowed states to invest in child care, making the system work more effectively for families and early education professionals. However, without additional federal investment, these efforts and improvements cannot be sustained. **We face staffing shortages, a reduction in available child care slots, and rising costs that will hurt children, families, and our economy.** At least \$16 billion per year in emergency child care dollars is needed to address the looming supply crisis, while laying the groundwork for sustained and transformative funding that will ensure children and families have access to the child care they need. In addition, employers can avoid child care-related disruptions, and states can sustain and build upon the improvements they have enacted over the past three years.
- ✓ 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, members of the larger community, and initiatives to support and expand the behavioral health workforce.

- ✓ The BCW **urges** Congress to pass the Ensuring Medicaid Continuity for Children in Foster Care Act. 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 debate over comprehensive immigration reform is ongoing. The BCW **advocates** that politics not get in the way of common sense policy, and urges the federal government to focus on reforms that protect our country's security and not lose sight of the important role that immigrants have had, and continue to have, in creating economic prosperity for our country.
- ✓ 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 **supports** a federal framework for Artificial Intelligence (AI) that provides uniform guidance, encourages innovation, and ensures that all residents are protected. Consistent with that framework, the BCW supports efforts to responsibly harness the opportunities from AI for state government use. The BCW also supports state efforts



BCW Board Members Stacey Tompkins, Karen Erren, Taryn Duffy and Cindy Delfino joined BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon and Executive Vice President/COO John Ravitz in Washington, DC for a series of meetings with members of Congress and policymakers.

to establish public-private partnerships that promote upskilling and investing in AI-related workforce programs, and efforts to enhance research and educational developments relating to AI.

The BCW shares Governor Hochul's belief that AI will play a significant role in every business sector. The recognition of AI's transformative potential aligns with the BCW's commitment to



technological innovation. **In 2024, the BCW will be introducing a year-long series entitled "AI Alliance 360,"** which will be devoted to helping the business

community prepare for the opportunities that await in this latest technical evolution.

- ✓ The BCW **supports** digital equity and the extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). This program, which has helped make broadband affordable for over 20 million households, is in danger of running out of funds by mid-2024. In New York, over 1.5 million households rely on ACP to afford broadband service and are at risk of losing internet if the funding is not extended. The need for affordable broadband is essential, and we cannot let this program expire.
- ✓ The BCW joins Feeding Westchester in **advocating** for bills to strengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that will enable them to expand their mission of providing food to a hunger-relief network of nearly 300 partners and programs within Westchester County. The Closing the Meal Gap Act (S.1336/H.R.3037) strengthens SNAP by basing the benefit allotments on the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan; boosting SNAP benefits for families with children forced to choose between food and shelter; for older Americans forced to choose between food and medicine; boosting the SNAP minimum monthly benefit, which currently is only \$23; and by improving equitable access by extending SNAP to Puerto Rico. Additionally, the Improving Access to Nutrition Act (H.R.1510) will end SNAP's arbitrary three-month time limit to ensure that all eligible people have access to nutrition assistance and stay healthy. Lastly, the Hot Foods Act of 2023 (H.R.3519) will end the prohibition on the use of SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared foods from food retailers.

# Board of Directors

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### **Chairman of the Board**

James Schutzer, JDM Benefits, An Alera Group Company

### **President/CEO**

Marsha Gordon, The Business Council of Westchester

### **Immediate Past Chair/Chairman of Nominating Committee**

Heidi Davidson, Galvanize Worldwide

### **Chairman of Nominating/Finance/Investment Committee**

Anthony Justic, Maier Markey & Justic

### **Vice Chair, Economic Development**

Tim Jones, Robert Martin Company

### **Vice Chair, Business Development, Corporate**

James Giangrande, Altium Wealth

### **Vice Chair, Governmental Action**

George Lence, Nicholas & Lence Communications

### **Vice Chair, Small Business**

Wiley Harrison, Business of Your Business

### **Treasurer**

Anthony Justic, Maier Markey & Justic

### **General Counsel**

Douglas Singer, Esq., Hollis Laidlaw & Simon P.C.

### **Secretary**

Stephen J. Jones, Esq., Jones, LLP

Elizabeth Bracken-Thompson, Thompson & Bender

Cynthia Delfino, YMCA of Central & Northern Westchester

Taryn Duffy, Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts

Peter Herrero, NY Hospitality Group

Dr. Belinda Miles, SUNY Westchester Community College

Glenn Pacchiana, Thalle Industries

George Poth, Regeneron

John Ravitz, The Business Council of Westchester

Amanda DePalma, The Business Council of Westchester

## DIRECTORS

Dr. Robert Amler  
New York Medical  
College

Joseph Apicella  
MacQuesten  
Development

Christina Armentano  
Paraco Gas

Millie Hernandez Becker  
Skyqueen Enterprises

Josephine Bertrams  
Heineken USA, Inc.

Colleen Borelli  
Burke Rehabilitation  
Hospital

David Campbell  
LeChase Construction

Dr. Seamus Carey  
Iona College

Robert Cioffi  
Progressive Computing

Stacey Cohen  
Co-Communications,  
Inc.

Jean Marie Connolly  
Altium Wealth

David DeMilia  
Tompkins Community  
Bank

Jon Dorf  
Dorf Nelson &  
Zauderer LLP

Paul Dunphey  
New York – Presbyterian  
Westchester

Patrick Dwyer  
MasterCard

Karen C. Erren  
Feeding Westchester

Susan Fox  
WIHD

April Horton  
Verizon

Sarah Jones-Maturo  
RM Friedland

Wilson Kimball  
Municipal Housing  
Authority for the City  
of Yonkers (MHACY)

Marvin Krislov  
Pace University

Larry Kwiat  
Reckson

Wallace Lynch  
KeyBank

Kevin Marbury  
York International  
Agency

Joseph McCoy  
Valley National Bank

Matthew McCrosson  
PFK O'Connor Davies,  
LLP

Ted Miller  
DataKey Consulting

Christopher O'Callaghan  
RM Friedland

Christina O'Shea-Daly  
Great Point Studios

Sal Rajput  
Walison Corp.

Ronnie Ram  
Inspiria Outdoor  
Advertising

Dr. Rajiv Ratan  
Burke Neurological  
Institute

Dr. Joseph Ricca  
White Plains Public  
Schools

Joseph Saccomano  
Jackson Lewis P.C.

Dr. Frank Sánchez  
Manhattanville College

Michael Schiliro  
PCSB Bank

Patricia Simone  
Simone Development  
Companies

Jill Singer  
Jill Singer Graphics

Jane Solnick  
Con Edison Company  
of New York, Inc.

Stacey Tompkins  
Tompkins Excavating

Maria Trusa  
Forme Medical Center  
& Urgent Care

Mark Weingarten  
DelBello Donnellan  
Weingarten Wise &  
Wiederkehr, LLP

Peter Wilcox  
PepsiCo Inc.

Russell Yankwitt  
Yankwitt LLP

### **HONORARY STATUS**

Thomas Lalla  
Ellen Lynch  
James O'Toole  
Stewart Strauss



... on the road to Albany.

The Business Council of Westchester  
800 Westchester Ave., Suite S-310 : Rye Brook, NY 10573  
914.948.2110 : [thebcw.org](http://thebcw.org)

Marsha Gordon : [mgordon@thebcw.org](mailto:mgordon@thebcw.org)  
John Ravitz : [jravitz@thebcw.org](mailto:jravitz@thebcw.org)