

GARRETT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2025 Legislative Agenda

TOP PRIORITIES:

The five items below are the top priorities of the Garrett County Chamber. Details on each issue are included in the full agenda which is comprised of additional issues the chamber believes are important to our community.

1. Preserve the Maryland Tip Credit (p.1)
2. Support Community Colleges (p.3)
3. Allocate additional funding to the State Lakes Protection & Restoration Fund (p.3)
4. Seek policies to advance affordable/workforce housing (p.3)
5. Advocate for policy actions to prevent excessive aquatic species in Maryland's lakes (p.2)

FULL AGENDA:

The issues included in our agenda are items that the Garrett County Chamber believes could have the biggest impact through legislative action.

Business Climate

A. Preserve the Maryland Tip Credit:

For an employee who regularly receives more than \$30 each month in tips and is informed by the employer about the tip credit provisions, an employer may apply a credit towards the hourly minimum wage due to the employee.

B. Support a Pro-Business Environment in MD & Oppose Unnecessary Workplace Regulations:

The General Assembly should oppose any new unnecessary business regulations that impede business growth and interfere with legitimate business operations.

C. Amend the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act without Further Expansion:

The General Assembly should amend the Maryland Working Families Act to include the following:

1. Increase the minimum number of hours worked per week to 30 to keep the law consistent with the Affordable Care Act. The 12-hour threshold is extremely low and promotes a poor work ethic. The low threshold eliminates the ability to reward hard work
2. Exclude seasonal employees. It is not necessary to provide sick and safe leave to employees that are in a temporary position. Sick and Safe Leave should be provided to permanent employees only. Again, this promotes a strong work ethic and provides the employer the ability to reward or support those loyal, hardworking employees.
3. Increase mandatory number of days worked from 106 to 120.

Tourism

A. Support future funding for Deep Creek Lake Dredging:

The Legislature must act to protect this very important Maryland recreational asset. The Garrett County Chamber urges the Legislature to support future funding for other coves now that the pilot project was successfully completed.

B. Support Proposed Legislation for Deep Creek Lake – Aquatic Vegetation Management Study

The Deep Creek Lake Aquatic Vegetation Management Study will determine the impact of lower lake levels on the management and spread of invasive and nuisance submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) species and impacts to shallow water sediment deposition and erosion as well as reduced growth around docks and swim areas.

C. Advocate for policy actions to prevent excessive aquatic species in Maryland's lakes:

Deep Creek Lake and other watersheds in Garrett County must be protected from invasive species. Legislative or regulatory changes that will protect our watersheds from invasive species will protect our natural resources and ensure Garrett County's environmental treasures remain a prime tourist destination.

D. Continue County Cooperative Marketing Grant Program:

The State should continue to direct \$2,500,000 to the County Cooperative Marketing Match Grant program, with the goal of increasing the amount to \$3 million, to leverage more local funds and better assist local jurisdictions with promotion to recover from the pandemic.

E. Maintain Tourism Promotion Funding:

Based on the return on investment from tourism, Maryland should continue funding tourism promotion at the same level as FY24 to remain competitive and generate additional revenues for the State.

F. Continue Funding the Heritage Area Program:

We appreciate the State's commitment to the Heritage Tourism program and request the program continue to be funded at the maximum allowed by law - \$6,000,000 per year – for continued growth of Heritage Tourism investment and revenues.

G. Support Mountain Maryland Recreational Trails

The Garrett County Chamber supports Garrett Trails request for funding the following projects to work towards completion of the Eastern Continental Divide Loop Trail:

- 1.** Provide funding to state and county land managers for annual trail maintenance obligations, as well as new trail development with long term partners including the US Army Corp of Engineers, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Garrett County Board of Commissioners.
- 2.** Increased maintenance and recreation focused staffing for all state parks located within the County, as well as the 55,000-acre Savage River State Forest and the 11,461-acre Potomac-Garrett State Forest.

3. Prioritize well-constructed pedestrian and cyclist walkways through all phases of transportation projects to increase safety and sustainability along State and County owned road sections of the Eastern Continental Divide Loop (ECDL).

Economic & Community Development

A. Support policies to ensure adequate affordable/workforce housing:

Urge the General Assembly to adopt policies that complement efforts by the Garrett County Board of County Commissioners to promote affordable/workforce housing (e.g. HB507 of 2024).

B. Allocate Additional Funding to the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund:

The General Assembly must allocate additional funding to the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund and eliminate the sunset as many of these projects are multi-year projects with multi-phase implementation.

C. Incentives for Childcare Facilities & Services:

Removing barriers for childcare providers to establish their businesses in communities that serve working families.

D. Support Funding for Broadband Development:

The Maryland Legislature needs to continue to invest in broadband development, specifically last-mile fiber, in rural communities and require ISPs to provide actual address-level data to determine where there is a lack of service.

Education

A. Support Community Colleges

1. Operating Budget: Support Restoration of full Cade Formula funding:

MACC has set a legislative goal of restoring the level of Cade Funding support to 29% of the allocation for four-year colleges and universities by FY2029. It did not set a specific target for FY26 due to the challenging state structural budget deficit.

2. Capital Budget Formula: Support capital funding to renovate space to meet needs of Garrett College's expanding intercollegiate athletic program:

Garrett College is seeking \$2.5 million in Miscellaneous General Obligation (GO) Bond Funding for renovation of the 700 Building to support the expansion of intercollegiate athletics, which is proving to be a significant revenue source in the operating component of the budget. The Garrett County Commissioners have already agreed to fund \$1.5 million of the renovation cost if the state funds the requested state share.