



## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The mission of the Greater Ocean City, Maryland Chamber of Commerce is to enhance the economic growth of the region by providing leadership, inspiration, education, and development opportunities to support and promote tourism and to assure the success of the business community.

The Greater Ocean City Chamber has an active Government Relations Committee and a contracted lobbyist, Dennis Rasmussen, who works on our behalf in Annapolis. This Committee maintains contact with our Eastern Shore Delegation and our Federal representatives on issues that have the potential to impact our membership. The Government Relations Committee has identified the following priorities for the 2024 Legislative Session.

Throughout the 2024 session, the Greater Ocean City Chamber will provide updates to our members and maintain an updated list of legislation that may affect our region. The Government Relations Committee will engage weekly with our lobbyist to stay abreast of any changes or action that may need to be taken. And lastly, the Committee will work closely with our elected officials and strategically with other statewide legislators who have similar priorities in their respective districts.

### 1 INCREASE TOURISM PROMOTION FUNDING

**A growing industry:** according to the MD Office of Tourism, the Maryland visitor economy continued to expand in 2022. Visitor volumes rose to 43.5 million, growing to 103% of pre-pandemic levels. Visitors spent \$19.4 billion in Maryland in 2022, generating a total of \$30.3 billion in total business sales including more than 187,200 jobs and \$2.3 billion in state and local tax revenues.

**Jobs:** Tourism, the 10th largest employment segment in Maryland in 2022, supporting 123,617 employees, a 9.5% increase in 2022. Approximately 1 out of every 20 jobs in Maryland are impacted by visitor activity to Maryland in 2022.

**Fiscal impact:** visitor spending in 2022 generated \$4.3 billion in government revenues (state and local taxes alone tallied \$2.3 billion in 2022) and each household in Maryland would need to be taxed an additional \$999 to replace the visitor-generated taxes received by state and local governments in 2022.

**Ocean City** – all key indicators indicate growth in Ocean City in 2022: visits nearly 150% of 2019 levels; visitor spending up 5% to \$2.3 billion in 2022; more than 13,200 jobs were supported by Ocean City visitors in 2022, providing \$246 million to state & local government through taxes.

### 2 WAGES

Support legislation **maintaining tip credit:** one size does not fit all for employers to maintain and recruit their workforce. We support Maryland Restaurant Association in their efforts to maintain the existing system that supports those in our community who rely on that income to support themselves and their families.

### 3 MAINTAIN LOCAL AUTHORITY ON MATTERS THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT OUR REGION

**Pool Regulations** – over 70% of the public pools in Maryland are located in Worcester County. Maintaining local authority over how the regulations are enforced is paramount to common sense legislation.

**Regional decision-making regarding increase to room tax.** In the 2023 session, this bill failed to receive passage by the full Senate membership due to objections from legislators in other parts of the state. Increasing room tax enables Ocean City to support the public services (police, etc.) necessary to support the growing tourism in our region.



# Ocean City, Maryland Chamber of Commerce

## 4 WORKFORCE / LABOR SHORTAGE

**Support and preserve the J-1 Summer Work Travel Program:** Continue to monitor and oppose any federal immigration reform legislation / regulations that would limit or inhibit the J-1 International/Summer Work Travel Students. Ocean City employs between 2,000-4,000 SWT students each season. Ocean City has become a model host community/destination for this Department of State Diplomacy Program. With staffing challenges across Maryland, particularly in the hospitality industry, keeping this program intact is paramount to a thriving tourism ecosystem in Ocean City.

**Support for incentives for workforce housing & subsidies for childcare:** Housing the seasonal workforce for this tourism community has become a critical blockage to businesses effectively serving the visitors to the region. If there is nowhere to house staff, and no one to watch the children of working parents, there will be insufficient employees to meet the business needs of the region.

## 5 TRANSPORTATION

Support West Ocean City commercial fishing harbor dredging.

Support expansion and funding of infrastructure programs: expansion of Route 90; expansion of the Salisbury Regional Airport (SBY) runway; expansion of public transportation (related to the workforce housing challenge)

## 6 KEEPING AN EYE ON

**Kirwin funding:** due to the structure of this program, all counties in Maryland, including Worcester County, will be responsible for a large percentage of the funding of the Blueprint in coming years.

**FAMLI:** execution of this legislation on existing timing will unnecessarily burden employees and employers.

**NOAA:** against adoption of speed zones negatively affecting the White Marlin Open event in Ocean City annually.

**Health Care:** issues regarding Emergency Room wait times and nursing shortages, impacting hospitals' ability to provide health care to the communities they serve.

**Condo/HOA Act Reforms:** due to the structure of this 2022 legislation, the assessment fees are rising dramatically

**Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** monitoring impact of proposed legislation by the Governor

**Opportunity Zones:** expansion of tax credits for development and businesses in our region.

**Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce Legislative Updates**  
<https://oceancity.org/government-relations/>



### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Government Relations Committee Chair: Joe Schanno**



**Executive Director: Amy Thompson**

**410-213-0144 x102**

**amy@oceancity.org**