



## 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, education, and development opportunities to support and promote tourism and to assure the success of the business community at large.

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 2025 Legislative Session.

Throughout the 2025 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 STATE TOURISM BUDGET

**A growing industry:** according to the MD Office of Tourism, the Maryland visitor economy continued to expand in 2023. Visitor volumes rose to 45.1 million. Visitors spent \$20.5 billion in Maryland in 2023, 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 11th largest employment segment in Maryland in 2023, supporting 190,660 employees.

**Fiscal impact:** visitor spending in 2023 generated \$2.4 billion in government revenues. Each household in Maryland would need to be taxed an additional \$1,027 to replace the visitor-generated taxes received by state and local governments in 2023.

**Why invest in Tourism?** \$1 spent on tourism marketing = \$34 for state and local economies in Maryland.

### 2 OPPOSE OFFSHORE WIND

The current plan for an offshore wind farm would place 114 turbines as close as 10.7 miles off of the coast of Ocean City, which, due to their size, would be visible from the shore day and night. The project also includes plans to utilize the West Ocean City Commercial Fishing Harbor for a maintenance facility, displacing one of the few remaining commercial fishing piers in the region. Losses to the fishing community and impact to the views of the beach experienced by visitors to Ocean City would have a detrimental impact on the tourism industry of Maryland's coastal communities.

### 3 OPPOSE ELIMINATION OF TIPPED CREDIT

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.



# 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.

## 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.

**iGaming:** oppose implementation of internet gaming in Maryland

**Taxes on Services:** oppose burdening small businesses with taxes on services (e.g. - accounting, human resources, legal services) to operate

**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:** support changes to BEPS

**Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce Legislative Updates**

**<https://oceancity.org/legislative-updates/>**



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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