



**MARYLAND HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
BALTIMORE HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

**Unified 2012 Legislative Priorities**

*The Hispanic Chambers of Commerce of Maryland seek to promote a business climate in the state of Maryland that fosters the economic development of the State and that ensures equal employment opportunities, fair treatment and full participation for all members of Maryland's minority communities.*

*Over the past ten years the Hispanic population, both U.S. born and immigrant, has been thriving, significantly contributing to the growing diverse racial and ethnic mix in the State. The growth of our community will continue to enrich the experiences of all residents of Maryland and present many new challenges, which we can all address to move our State forward well into the second decade of this millennium.*

*Along with a business climate that enables our businesses to thrive, gainful employment for our people is a top priority. We also strongly support access to opportunities and entrepreneurial options, affordable education and the enactment of policies that allow all children raised in Maryland to receive a college education., We ask that you take action on the following priorities that represent our combined legislative agenda*

Taxes: Businesses need a stable, predictable, and fair environment in which to thrive. This is particularly important for small businesses. We support legislation that limits tax, fee, and penalties that would be imposed on small businesses as a consequence of its enactment.

Small Business Support: Maryland entrepreneurs must be encouraged to develop their own businesses creating sustainable jobs for other residents and improving the State's economy. We support legislation that promotes creation and ensures sustainability of small businesses, such as incentives for investments in small business and the funding of special small business support programs that provide access to affordable legal assistance, business development resources, and financial management. We also support fairness in procurement awards by supporting, continuing and enhancing existing programs for minority and woman owned small businesses, such as the WSSC SLMBE program and the State of Maryland MBE program. In addition, we support the Governor's Small Business Commission recommendation to set aside certain procurement opportunities of a specified size to the Small Business Reserve Program.

Minority Business Enterprises: We support the re-authorization of the MBE/WBE program. We further support legislation that ensures entities considered a "Minority Business Enterprise" are

in fact owned and controlled by minorities. We support legislation that requires more transparency in the MBE / WBE bid process, and makes the certification process more streamlined. We understand that our chambers will work hard to get more members certified, but it takes a transparent and streamlined process to make this more attainable for our businesses.

Workforce Development and Education: We support programs that help Maryland residents develop the skills necessary to be gainfully employed in Maryland continue to be supported and enhanced. We support legislation that reduces the cost of education for students in Maryland, such as legislation that exempts textbooks from the State's sales tax. Access to education for all Maryland students is extremely important; we look forward to working with the legislature on initiatives that ensure equal access to education for all Maryland residents regardless of immigration status.

Immigrant Discrimination: We do not support any legislation that disproportionately targets foreign born residents of Maryland. A worker's immigration status is a matter of federal law and should be left to the federal government to enforce. Legislation that requires verification of immigrant status at the state level is likely to single out Hispanic immigrants, whether documented or undocumented, disproportionately. The E-verify system is not sufficiently accurate and mandating its adoption at the state level will result in employee racial profiling. In addition, we support legislation that ensures the human rights of all residents of this state are protected, including the basic human rights of foreign born residents who may not be documented.

Health Care Act: We support any legislation to implement the federal Affordable Health Care Act and ensure that the costs of implementation of the Act have a minimal impact on small businesses in the state. This legislation (SB 238, SB 234 and SB 206) will ensure more people become insured and provide tax benefits for businesses to provide health care to their employees.

*The Hispanic business community in the State will continue to grow. We need your help in ensuring that all businesses have a level playing field in which to thrive. We recognize the challenges facing every single person living in this country in the current economic climate. We ask you to ensure that Maryland to be a small-business friendly state that embraces ethnic and racial diversity in all sectors of the community, encouraging programs that promote attractive employment opportunities for all State residents, and working towards a thriving economic future for our children.*