



# RESILIENCY AND RECOVERY TASK FORCE

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## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Resiliency and Recovery Task Force (Task Force) of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce formed to develop long term policy solutions to support the state as we recover from the economic crisis caused by Covid-19. The Task Force represents a variety of industries including manufacturing, healthcare, and financial institutions with leaders from every corner of the state.

**The Task Force focused on six key areas:**



Over months of virtual meetings, the Task Force considered insights from Georgia leaders and industry experts to understand unique trends occurring in our state as well as broad global trends. This effort has led to the crafting of actionable opportunities for state leaders.

The following recommendations serve as a blueprint for state policy solutions that will serve the state well not only in the short-term but will bolster long-term resiliency efforts. It is integral to enact solutions that will meet our current future needs and prospective future needs. These policies will increase Georgia’s ability to effectively respond, adapt, and evolve to solve today’s challenges and reimagine tomorrow’s opportunities.

# A. ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

## Policy Recommendations

- ★ **Quality Jobs Tax Credit (QJTC) Portability:** Allow the tax benefit to be retained for new jobs created that are valid under the Quality Jobs Tax Credit that are transferred to a different legal entity of the company.
  - The QJTC is meant to incentivize employers to create quality, high paying jobs. With Georgians unemployed due the pandemic, our state cannot afford for regulations to limit opportunity and investment.
  - **“Restrictions like this impact our calculus as we evaluate opportunities to create new jobs and employ more Georgians.”**
- ★ **Re-training Tax Credit Update:** Limitations on this credit do not allow it to be utilized to upskill or cross train current employees unless new technology or new equipment are being used. The new needs induced by this pandemic necessitate rapid, nimble adaptations meaning re-training of employees is essential to recover and build resiliency.
  - Industry experts explained that multiple scenarios with various eventualities are needed to successfully re-boot and re-imagine operations. Enacting contingencies requires talent to be prepared for various roles and responsibilities.
  - **“The current Re-training tax credit does not apply to upskilling current employees to new roles in different areas of the company or cross-training.”**
- ★ **Research & Development Tax Credit Modernization:** This credit has become outdated. It should be modernized to mirror updates that have occurred at the federal level to provide for continuity and reflect the full scope of what Research & Development encompasses in a modern economy.
  - **“Current limits on the credit, which exist due to being outdated, create artificial steps, making companies jump through hoops, and do not allow for utilization on much Research & Development activity.”**
  - Resiliency depends on our ability to innovate and advance. Research & development is an essential part of this process to push Georgia forward.
- ★ **New Life Sciences Tax Credit:** The state of Georgia has already made substantial investments in the life sciences industry through corporate re-locations and the Bio-Science Quick Start Training Center. As this industry continues to boom and evaluate re-locations operations in the U.S., Georgia should be prepared to capitalize on this opportunity.
- ★ **Lawsuit Abuse Reform:** Frivolous lawsuits lead to higher insurance rates, higher costs for goods and services, and creates unpredictability for the entire business community. Businesses and consumers are already strained financially and operating with unprecedented instability. Reforms related to premises liability, trucking lawsuits, and seatbelt admissibility, among others, are needed to manage the lawsuit abuse crisis that was already problematic prior to Covid-19 and continue to burden businesses today.

# B. UPSKILLING AND WORKFORCE

## Policy Recommendations

- ★ **College Readiness:** The Post-Pandemic jobs landscape requires both upskilling and better foundations for college and career success. To that end we recommend:
  - **K12 Curriculum of the Future:** K-12 curriculum should be examined and modified to ensure students are prepared at an early age for the skills they will need to be competitive in the workforce. This includes computer science, data fluency, coding and cybersecurity.
  - **Professional Development for Teachers:** Teachers need additional resources to prepare students to be adaptable and meet the needs of Georgia’s evolving economy. State funds should be prioritized for the professional development of teachers related to coding, data fluency, and technology utilization in the classroom.
  - **Strategic College & Career Advising:** Targeted college and career guidance is vital to ensure students enroll in post-secondary education and complete a credential or degree. Funding should be provided for College Advising Corps advisors to eventually be in every high school in the state.
  - **FAFSA Completion:** Financial difficulties exist for many Georgia students, and these challenges have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Students should be required to complete the FAFSA in order to receive HOPE funding with an opt-out option for families that are sure they will not qualify for federal aid. This will allow more students to access federal dollars to help pay for college, decreasing their student debt.
  - **Needs Based Scholarships:** By 2025, 60% of jobs will require some type of college degree or credential. Right now, only 36.8% of Georgians have an associate degree or above and in rural Georgia the share shrinks to 24.9%. The opportunity to provide needs-based scholarships to Georgia students should be explored so our state’s workforce remains competitive in the short and long-term.
  - **Last Mile Completion Grants:** Create statewide last mile completion grants like Georgia State University’s Panther grant, to enable students currently enrolled in post-secondary education complete their degree and contribute to Georgia’s workforce. These could be funded through continued corporate and private giving as well as interest from lottery reserves or appropriated dollars.
  - **Foreign-Born Barriers to Higher Education:** Foreign born individuals first must complete a GED before enrolling in a technical college or university. Allowing these legal immigrants to pursue a GED and higher education simultaneously would allow them to move into the workforce more quickly and contribute to Georgia’s economy. Similarly, legal immigrants do not qualify for in-state tuition for one year. This prevents many legal immigrants from enrolling in technical colleges and universities because of the cost. Reducing this wait time would enable more individuals to obtain the skills Georgia needs to grow our economy more efficiently.
  - **Digitization of Student Supports:** With increased separation, it is vital students can access more information online, especially in an interactive format. Tools such as chat bots, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Zoom counseling sessions provide new opportunities to engage with students through technology and meet their needs.

- ★ **Lifelong Learning Task Force:** Over 10 million Americans are still out-of-work and 39 million Americans will lose their jobs in the next 5 to 10 years because of the rise of AI, robotics and system platforms. Georgia’s universities, technical colleges and businesses should work together to develop new education delivery models for a rapidly changing economy.
  - **“Not only will students need certifications and degrees, but they’ll need to update their skills continually throughout their lives and our current post-secondary systems need to expedite their efforts to address this changing paradigm.”**
- ★ **Licensure Reform:** Licensure reform offers an actionable, short-term opportunity to reduce regulation and better enable our state to meet its workforce needs. Qualified individuals licensed in other states, but living in Georgia, are not able to utilize their skills due to regulations. Changing these requirements would enable individuals to get back to work, stabilizing their income and bolstering economic recovery.
  - **Healthcare Industry Licensure Reform:** Enact licensure reciprocity agreements and licensure compacts for a range of healthcare professionals including physicians, physicians’ assistants, certified nursing assistants, and respiratory therapists, which are licensed in states with similar requirements to Georgia. This will allow our state to meet current high demand and support continued growth of our healthcare professions.
  - **Plumbing, HVAC and other Trades Licensure Reform:** Individuals licensed as HVAC, plumbing, and electrical professionals in other states should be able to practice in Georgia. Services continue to be in high demand and regulatory barriers should not prevent an individual from individual in utilizing their skills, especially if they have been recently displaced due to Covid-19.
  - **Reduce Regulations for Foreign-Born:** Licensing regulations currently prevent legal immigrants with specific skillsets like dentistry from moving into that field without a significant delay. Reforms should be enacted to allow them to move more quickly into their field while demonstrating their competencies and credentials.

## C. INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE FUTURE

### Policy Recommendations

- ★ **Freight & logistics investment:** Additional investments are needed to support the growing current needs and future capacity. Furthermore, supporting infrastructure is needed to support our growth including warehouse space, truck parking, as well as the ability to embed new technologies in infrastructure as it emerges.
  - **“Transforming our transportation network would create over \$480 billion in GDP growth for Georgia over the next 30 years and generate up to 425,000 new jobs.”**
  - **“There is unquestionably a direct correlation between transportation infrastructure and growing Georgia’s economy. Georgia has an enormous opportunity for big business in freight and logistics that will make our state the capital of the eastern seaboard. Investing in and making transportation a priority right now will only boost Georgia’s economy in the future.”**
- ★ **Bridging the Digital Divide:** Investments are needed to support the growing utilization of more online services. Underserved areas need investment in broadband and 5G, but capacity also must be expanded to support Georgians’ evolving needs and propel smart infrastructure development in communities across our state.

- ★ **Private Financing of Infrastructure:** Identify and remove legal or regulatory impediments to the growth of public-private partnerships in the timely procurement, design, construction, improvement, renovation, expansion, equipping, maintenance, operation, implementation, installation, and financing of public infrastructure and government facilities within this state that serve a public need and purpose.

## D. INNOVATION AND CYBERSECURITY

### Policy Recommendations

- ★ **Cyber Security Safe Harbor:** Enact a cyber security safe harbor law that provides a legal safe harbor for companies that go to the highest standards to protect consumer data.
  - **“We must move away from contingency planning to scenario planning and move away from a checklist approach to a more comprehensive approach. We need to think about the future and what the next normal may require.”**
- ★ **Georgia Research Alliance:** Fully funding GRA will jump start Georgia’s innovation economy and expand opportunities for increased research and development throughout the state. These investments will attract new talent and investments from entities around the globe bolstering Georgia’s global competitiveness.
  - **“Georgia should have a full-out effort to develop more patents and more commercialization. Currently the state ranks 32nd in patent development and that’s just not good enough in this new economy.”**
- ★ **Cyber Workforce Development:** Create and expand existing programs in our K-12 system and higher education institutions in tandem with industry to increase our state’s cyber resiliency.
  - **“There is not enough talent and we have not had a clear tack to get into the industry. It is no longer about getting the best resume. Our challenge is to get to talent and move people along with re-skilling and credentials along the way.”**
  - **“We have to prepare talent to focus on strategic thinking as aspects of cybersecurity become automated with cognitive and cyber technologies.”**
- ★ **Portable Benefits:** More and more Georgians are choosing non-traditional work paths through the gig economy. Many non-traditional workers have been severely impacted by the economic crisis, including numerous lower wage earners. Often, these workers have a limited financial safety nets and do not have paid sick leave. To support a 21st century workforce, policies should be enacted that increase access to benefits that travel with workers and support quality of life.

# E. RURAL RESILIENCY

## Policy Recommendations

- ★ **Rural Remote Work Jobs Tax Credit:** Allow Atlanta (or other urban area) based companies to hire remote workers in a rural Georgia community and receive the Tiered tax credit associated for those new jobs.
  - **“This would help Atlanta companies looking for qualified workers and benefit rural communities that are providing an untapped talent pool. It’s a win-win idea.”**
- ★ **In-State Tuition for Targeted Schools:** Many smaller rural Georgia colleges have struggled pre-COVID-19 enrollment and those trends will continue. At the same time many Georgia students, because of their DACA status, do not qualify for in-state tuition and therefore are less likely to get the credentials needed for long term economic mobility. By allowing certain schools to accept in-state tuition for Dreamers both the school and the students could find long term benefit.
  - **“Talent retention remains a top concern for leaders in rural communities. This allows rural communities to develop more home-grown talent to fill current and future job needs.”**
- ★ **Rural Technology Infrastructure Funding:** Enact policies that promote increased private investments in technological infrastructure. Increase funds, incentives for private investment, and grants for technological infrastructure advancements to support rural small businesses, colleges, hospitals, and local governments as well as prepare for smart community development.
  - **“Technology and broadband access will play an influential in the resiliency of rural Georgia.”**
  - **“Nearly 70% of households and businesses without access to reliable broadband are in Rural counties.**