

2026 Guiding Principles



The Chamber of Catawba County supports public policy that promotes a strong business climate and fosters economic development.

Workforce Development Initiatives

We support investments in education that increase educational attainment and promote affordable educational opportunities. We support policies which promote the availability and affordability of childcare for the current workforce and promote high quality early learning for the future workforce. We support policies that help the previously incarcerated and those dealing with mental health challenges or substance use disorders to integrate into the workforce.

Infrastructure Investment

We support investments in the infrastructure required to support a strong economy, including roads, broadband, water/sewer and housing. We support forward-thinking investments that will support the future economy.

Smart Taxation

We support tax policies that lower rates on business owners and return tax revenues to the communities in which they are collected. Governments should avoid taxes on business investment and innovation and that disadvantage US firms in international trade.

Appropriate Regulations

We believe that regulations must achieve government objectives in the least restrictive manner possible while creating minimum negative consequences. The government should avoid imposing obligations on businesses or delegating duties to different government entities without ensuring there is adequate financial support.

Affordable Healthcare

We support policies that make health insurance affordable and accessible, and create insurance options, especially for small businesses

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2026 Legislative Agenda



In support of these guiding principles, The Chamber of Catawba County supports the following specific legislative initiatives.

1. Advance Comprehensive Transportation Improvements by prioritizing the following:

- State and federal funding for the Hickory Regional Airport for runway extension, terminal renovations, hangar development, and other upgrades in preparation of the return of commercial service.
- Transportation finance reform that supplements the fuel tax and ensures all users equitably support the construction and maintenance of North Carolina's roads and highways.

2. Support policies that ensure reliable and affordable energy for both current and future generations by promoting timely investment in energy infrastructure, maintaining a diverse and dispatchable energy mix, and balancing long-term sustainability goals with cost transparency and regulatory oversight.

3. Advance Education as a Workforce Strategy: As the voice of business, we support policies that align education with workforce needs and long-term economic growth.

- Supporting programs that promote the development, recruitment and retention of early childhood workforce, K-12 staff and teachers, and community college instructors and personnel.
- Supporting school report card reform that places additional emphasis on student growth and recognizes additional ways to measure achievement in students beyond standardized testing.
- Supporting additional capital funding for school construction at the state and local levels to keep pace with our growing community and ensure every student has a quality learning environment.
- Supporting calendar flexibility to promote educational attainment including allowing first semester final exams to be taken before winter holiday and to align high school schedules with community college schedules for those students who are dually enrolled.
- Supporting additional funding for and centralization of North Carolina's higher education grant-based programs, for both public and private institutions, as well as, sustained federal funding for higher education.

4. Support Funding for a State Park in Catawba County which includes the NC Wilderness Gateway State Trail.

5. Expand Access to Affordable, High-Quality Child Care.

- Support initiatives that increase access and workforce sustainability through:
- Greater investment in child care subsidy programs.
- Strategies to strengthen compensation and retention of early childhood educators.
- Targeted regulatory flexibility that preserves safety and quality while reducing unnecessary barriers to expanding capacity.

6. Advance Income-Aligned Housing.

- Support efforts to reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers, strengthen strategic local planning, and leverage public-private partnerships, while advocating for robust and accessible state and federal financing tools to make workforce housing economically feasible in Catawba County.

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