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2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION JOINT POSITION PAPER

Ensuring that Charleston & Huntington are located in the same Congressional District in 2022. As West Virginia will lose one of its members of the United State House of Representatives in 2022, we believe that it is imperative that Charleston and Huntington be located in the same Congressional District. Our two largest population centers in West Virginia must work together on a more consistent basis and not fall into past pitfalls of provincialism. By working collectively, we combine our strengths and better serve the communities along Interstate 64 as a larger economic development region. What happens in Huntington often affects Charleston and we believe the converse is true as well, so being in the same Congressional District will allow these two cities to be further connected through leadership and future planning.

Continued Support of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs. As many of our member companies are focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs, we believe that it is important our groups follow their example and work to advance these initiatives. It is unconscionable that we live in a time where a person can lose their employment, evicted from their home, or denied service due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. By embracing inclusiveness and understanding, we allow our economic developers to show potential employers that we are place that wants to do business with everyone.

Provide protections for WV Businesses from COVID-19 Lawsuits. COVID-19 and the necessary guidelines that followed its outbreak have not only disrupted our lives, but it also disrupted our economy. While progress continues to occur and West Virginia leads the nation in its response effort with vaccinations, many of our employers face an uncertain future as our economy is reopened. No one could have predicted the historic economic impact of COVID-19, so we believe it is unfair to hold employers' responsible for a global pandemic that surprised all of us. We ask both Congress and the West Virginia Legislature to protect businesses from opportunistic litigation that will further harm our private sector and decrease employment opportunities for our fellow West Virginians.

Support of Remote Working and Relocation-To-WV Programs. It is critical that West Virginia staunch its population loss and find new and innovative ways to (1) bring new people to the Mountain State and (2) retain the population that we have. We support the development of programs that will bring people to West Virginia to work and live, but we must have the necessary infrastructure to make this goal a possibility, such as reliable and robust broadband connectivity. In the same way that scholarship funds are stacked to provide the best support for a student's education, we hope that multiple relocation programs from various organizations can reverse the trend and bring people to West Virginia to enjoy all that we have to offer.