



2025 GSBA Legislative Priorities

Economic Revitalization & Sustainability

Businesses are the reflection of the vibrancy and identity of their community. Most LGBTQ-owned businesses are small, local ventures with few employees. It's essential that we create an environment in which these businesses are insulated against economic hardship and supported in their growth. Major corporations and industries must also be supported. GSBA supports policies that:

- Promote a smart regulatory scheme that eases burdens on businesses, particularly in relation to labor policy, zoning, taxation, and permitting requirements
- Advance programs that reduce barriers and promote access to capital; and provide technical assistance to support the growth of new businesses
- Aim to uplift integral regional industries such as restaurants, arts, hospitality, trade industries, and manufacturing
- Equip our state with robust tourism infrastructure and support
- Increase avenues for historically marginalized communities to open businesses, including but not limited to providing economic support for startup costs; increasing personal credit protections; and grant efforts targeted at small and micro-business support
- Support fair and equitable tax reform that benefits small businesses

Workforce Development

Our members have spoken—one of the most needed areas of support is in workforce development. A happy, well-trained workforce is key to our state's economic success and future development. We support policies that increase access to training and worker development opportunities; and that work toward fostering a diverse, supportive industry environment.

- Help LGBTQ+ business enterprises (LGBTBE)s gain certification, inclusion, and access to Washington State supplier diversity opportunities
- Promote worker training and education programs that address gaps in our state's workforce needs and provide a range of future career opportunities
- Expand pre-apprenticeship programs and ensure they are designed to support workers who are underrepresented in apprenticeship programs through outreach, education, and legislative action
- Invest in industry training programs to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion competency at the employer and trainer level

Public Safety

Community safety continues to be a top priority for Washingtonians. The LGBTQ+ community is uniquely affected by their region's safety climate as anti-LGBTQ+ violence continues to escalate. Moreover, increased break-ins, gun violence, vandalism, and more threaten business' sustainability. We support solutions that provide immediate support for those impacted by public safety crises, as well as systemic reform that increases access to rehabilitative and housing services. GSBA approaches public safety through a multifaceted lens by supporting evidence-based policies that:

- Help local businesses deal with property crime, vandalism, etc. by providing adequate resources to address non-violent calls with the urgency our community needs
- Support policies that implement and fund treatment options for behavioral health and substance use disorder; housing access; and crisis response programs
- Reduce instances of violent gun crime
- Build non-police response units to help connect those in crisis with the services and support they need
- Promote non-punitive deferral over incarceration for non-violent offenders
- Support equitable access to justice for all

Education

LGBTQ+ students are facing an unprecedented number of attacks on their right to privacy and bodily autonomy. The recent election of a conservative President and Congress underscores the urgency of this issue, as right-wing lawmakers now have the power to act on their vows to undermine transgender students' access to an equal education. Threats include but are not limited to banning transgender women from gender-appropriate sporting leagues, reducing access to gender-affirming support at school, and reducing protections for queer teachers. This rhetoric harms students' mental health and makes it difficult for them to engage in class – it's hard for students to focus in the face of constant threats to their identity. GSBA believes in cultivating the future leaders of our LGBTQ+ community by building a school system that is inclusive for all. Moreover, we aim to set up our next generation for success by improving access to higher education, both at colleges and universities and through workforce development programming.

- Mandate LGBTQ+ comprehensive sex-education, including promoting LGBTQ+ therapy and support services in schools
- Protect students' privacy and identities at school
- Incorporate LGBTQ+ history and identity into classroom curriculums statewide to promote historical understanding and inclusion of our community
- Expand access to early learning and childcare services for low and middle-income workers
- Finance access to higher education for LGBTQ+ students
- Promote accountability for school boards statewide to ensure LGBTQ+ protections are met

Community Infrastructure

As the cost of doing business continues to rise, small businesses and workers are facing increasing difficulties in accessing the infrastructure they need to serve their communities. Our members have expressed a need for more affordable commercial rent; affordable housing options close to the workplace; increased transportation options for commuters; and expanded childcare support. GSBA supports policies that build an environment in which business thrives.

- Update permitting and zoning policies, land use regulations, and development standards to increase the construction of affordable and workforce housing, especially in and near transit and commercial areas
- Provide increased avenues for small businesses to access commercial spaces
- Ensure our statewide transportation infrastructure retains funding in an equitable way
- Support communities in rezoning efforts to expand retail density and affordable commercial spaces
- Continue to invest in low income housing, including permanent supportive and low-income housing, and preserving current housing that is affordable today
- Support the expansion of shelter care and emergency housing for people with the greatest amount of need; including expanding protection for transgender residents
- Support community-centered housing options such as LGBTQ+-specific housing initiatives

Health Care

A healthy economy requires a healthy workforce. GSBA understands the many nuances that come into play with LGBTQ+ health care, particularly around access to HIV/AIDS medication; gender-expansive services; and reproductive care. While Federal support of LGBTQ+-affirming healthcare is in jeopardy under a Republican-led government, it is important that our state legislature continues to lead in support of state-based health care policy. We support policies that expand access to these services for the LGBTQ+ community, as well as health care more broadly.

- Advocate that our state's health care practitioners receive education in the LGBTQ+ community
- Expand and ease access to gender affirming care
- Elevate community concerns to decision-makers in the health care industry

Statement on Washington State Budget

Washington State is entering this legislative session with dampened expectations for tax revenues. Projected tax collections are \$477 million below the forecast lawmakers relied on during the 2024 legislative session. This could worsen depending on the outcome of the 3 referendums on November's ballot. As lawmakers scrutinize existing statewide budget items for cuts, GSBA will work diligently to oppose cuts in programs that support the LGBTQ+ and business communities. The budget intersects with many of the above topics, and we will keep a close eye on the ground to ensure potential new tax streams do not disproportionately harm our community.

Statement on Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has transformed the workplace experience in recent years. Now, it is imperative for lawmakers and industry to come together to ensure that this new frontier can be accessed equitably and used in service to society. There are many ways AI technology can specifically affect the LGBTQ+ and small business communities. GSBA is watching this issue carefully, particularly focusing on three issues: data bias and transparency as it relates to the LGBTQ+ community; intellectual property and creative protection; and AI products aimed at small businesses. We have not incorporated AI into specific tiers because the issue is so new; instead, we plan to monitor the topic and advance our advocacy into AI policy as it pertains to other elements presented in our Legislative Priorities and Tiers lists.