



**OHIO CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE**

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Ohio Chamber Research Foundation Announces Melissa Powers and Kenny McDonald as New Fellows

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio Chamber Research Foundation today announced the appointment of Melissa Powers as Legal Climate Fellow and Kenny McDonald as Economic Development Fellow, two distinguished leaders who will help shape policy conversations critical to Ohio’s economic competitiveness.

The Fellows Program engages experienced leaders and subject-matter experts to provide research, insights, and thought leadership on the issues most impacting Ohio’s business climate. Through this initiative, Fellows collaborate with policymakers, business leaders, and stakeholders to advance data-driven solutions that support economic growth and job creation.

“Melissa and Kenny bring an exceptional depth of experience and credibility in their respective fields,” said Ohio Chamber President & CEO Steve Stivers. “Their leadership will strengthen our ability to elevate thoughtful, solutions-oriented discussions around Ohio’s legal and economic landscape.”

Melissa Powers Named Legal Climate Fellow

Melissa Powers joins the Foundation as Legal Climate Fellow, where she will focus on the role of Ohio’s legal system in shaping economic growth, business investment, and competitiveness.

A longtime public servant, Powers most recently served as Hamilton County Prosecuting Attorney. Over the course of her career, she has served in multiple roles within the Hamilton County Prosecutor’s Office, including the Appellate, Juvenile, Municipal, and Felony divisions, and as Assistant Chief of the Municipal Division. She also served as a judge, bringing a well-rounded perspective to the legal system.

“Ohio’s legal climate plays a critical role in shaping business confidence and economic growth,” said Powers. “I’m honored to join the Ohio Chamber Research Foundation as Legal Climate Fellow and look forward to working with business and policy leaders to ensure our legal system is transparent, balanced, and supportive of innovation and investment across the state.”

In her role as Fellow, Powers will help translate complex legal issues into clear, actionable insights, with a focus on areas such as tort reform, litigation trends, legal transparency, and the broader impact of Ohio’s legal climate on business investment and entrepreneurship.

Kenny McDonald Named Economic Development Fellow

Kenny McDonald will serve as Economic Development Fellow, bringing decades of experience leading some of the premier economic development organizations in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Ohio.

McDonald recently announced his retirement as President and CEO of One Columbus after 15 years of leadership, during which the Columbus Region experienced historic economic growth. Under his direction, the region secured more than 80,000 new jobs and nearly \$50 billion in capital investment, while consistently ranking among the top metro areas in the nation for economic development.

“Ohio is at a pivotal moment when it comes to competing for jobs and investments that will shape the future of our state and perhaps, the nation,” said McDonald. “I’m excited to serve as Economic Development Fellow and contribute to conversations that align infrastructure, workforce, and policy in a way that positions Ohio for sustained, long-term growth.”

As Economic Development Fellow, McDonald will focus on the intersection of infrastructure, workforce, and public policy, helping to elevate discussions around Ohio’s ability to compete for major investment and job creation. His work will address key issues including energy capacity, site readiness, talent pipelines, and regulatory competitiveness.

Advancing Ohio’s Competitive Edge

Through research, commentary, and engagement, both Fellows will contribute to ongoing policy discussions and participate in events, roundtables, and public forums hosted by the Ohio Chamber and its Research Foundation.

The Ohio Chamber is the state’s leading business advocate and represents thousands of companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

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