



OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Guest Column:

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The Blueprint for Ohio's Next Economic Chapter

Ohio is in a strong position.

We have a diverse economy, a skilled workforce, world-class universities, abundant energy and water, and a location that puts us within a day's drive of more than 60% of the U.S. and Canadian populations.

We have also made real progress in recent years. Since the Ohio Chamber of Commerce first released its *Blueprint for Ohio's Economic Future* in 2022, Ohio has climbed from 15th on CNBC's "Top States for Business" list to first in the nation in 2026.

But we cannot take that progress for granted.

Other states are competing aggressively for businesses, workers and investment. Technology is changing how we work. Our population is aging. Workforce shortages remain a challenge. And while Ohio has made progress in several areas, our economic growth has not kept pace with our potential.

That is why the Ohio Chamber recently released an updated [*Blueprint for Ohio's Economic Future*](#). Its overarching goal is straightforward: Ohio should pursue a sustained trajectory of at least 3 percent annual economic growth.

Three percent growth may sound like just another economic statistic, but it has real benefits. Growth means more jobs, higher wages, more investment and more opportunities for Ohioans. It gives businesses a reason to expand here and gives young people a reason to stay.

Our updated Blueprint focuses on six areas that will determine whether we can reach that goal: education and workforce, sense of place, taxes and costs, innovation and collaboration, infrastructure, and business friendliness.

We have already made great progress in several of these categories. According to CNBC, Ohio now ranks first nationally in infrastructure, second in cost of doing business and sixth in technology and innovation. Our business-friendliness ranking has improved from 47th to 25th.

But the report also highlights where we need to improve. Education and workforce are still challenges, and our overall economic performance has slipped relative to other states.

Workforce is a particularly important piece of the puzzle. Ohio's population is aging, and our labor supply is limited. We need to do a better job of connecting education and training to the jobs that are available, and we also need to address barriers that keep people out of the workforce.

Child care is one example. Ohio loses an estimated \$5.48 billion each year because of inadequate child care access, while employers face nearly \$4 billion in costs from absenteeism, turnover and lost productivity. That makes child care an economic issue, not just a family one.

Additionally, we need to continue to invest in the infrastructure that makes growth possible. Ohio's investments in broadband, site readiness, water and transportation have helped make us a national leader. Now we need to keep pace with demand for energy, industrial sites and other infrastructure needed to support new investment.

We also need to keep creating an environment where businesses can innovate and grow. Ohio has already attracted major investments in semiconductors, advanced manufacturing, data centers, aerospace and other industries. We should continue building on that momentum while making sure Ohio's existing businesses have the opportunity to grow, too.

The good news? We know progress is possible, because we have already seen it.

Since 2022, Ohio has reduced income tax rates, eliminated the Commercial Activity Tax for approximately 90% of businesses, streamlined regulations, expanded workforce-focused education and training and invested in broadband and industrial development.

The first Blueprint helped provide a roadmap for that work. This updated Blueprint builds on it. Now the challenge is execution.

If we can sustain 3% annual economic growth, we will create more opportunity for businesses, workers and families across the state.

That is a goal worth pursuing, and one that we must work together to achieve.

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Steve Stivers is the President & CEO of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, roles he has held since he retired from his position as U.S. Representative for Ohio's 15th congressional district in 2021.

If media would like to discuss this issue further with Steve, please reach out to Amanda at aehrmantraut@ohiochamber.com or 567-203-8868.