

## Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA)

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Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA) is a non-profit dedicated to fostering a robust, equity-centered technology sector that empowers thriving communities. WTIA welcomes opportunities to partner with policymakers and our members to identify actionable solutions to pressing policy challenges.

### **Invest in workforce development, education, and apprenticeship**

Washington's technology sector is the state's fastest-growing private sector employer. The shortage of talent within the state available to fill new jobs, and the opportunity that these jobs provide for Washingtonians, requires continued investment in a range of workforce development programs. Building off recent funding for critical higher education programs, WTIA will continue to advocate for increased investment in programs that strengthen channels into the tech workforce. This includes continued investment in K-12 and higher education computer science programs, as well as expansion of STEM programs for youth in underserved and marginalized communities. Increased investment in registered technology apprenticeship is also a critical pathway to help grow the tech talent pipeline, particularly for women, veterans, and members of the BIPOC community.

### **Enable innovation and growth across the technology sector**

WTIA will continue to provide technology expertise to policymakers to help inform the development of policies that foster innovation, advance equity and inclusion in the use of technology, and strengthen consumer trust. In many cases, WTIA supports legislation at the federal level to avoid a burdensome and contradictory patchwork of state regulations. Across these efforts, WTIA will work with policymakers to identify opportunities to leverage innovative technologies – such as blockchain, 5G, and artificial intelligence – in government services and programs. Additionally, proposed new revenue streams should not hamper job creation or economic growth, both of which are critical for our economy to recover and grow.

### **Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the technology sector**

Building on the work of the WTIA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Office and its Anti-Racism in Tech Pact, WTIA leads concrete efforts to overhaul current practices in the technology sector that disproportionately impact Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in the workplace. WTIA also advocates for policies that are foundational to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion across the tech workforce.

## Foster a robust startup ecosystem

Startups are the foundational pillar of Washington's innovation ecosystem. Increasing state-level competition among emerging tech hubs and the new realities of remote work have accelerated the imperative for policymakers in Washington state to take steps to attract and retain startup founders and employees that can drive economic growth and job creation. WTIA will work as a partner with policymakers as we interpret this rapidly evolving landscape; account for the new realities of geographic flexibility; strengthen BIPOC, women, and immigrant participation in the startup sector; and assess opportunities to attract and retain founders and innovative companies.

## Close the digital divide

The global pandemic has shined a bright spotlight on the digital divide across Washington, where unequal access to or adoption of technologies and digital literacy education has exacerbated disparities in education and economic opportunities for BIPOC, lower income, and rural communities. WTIA partners with and builds bridges between industry and policymakers to identify opportunities to close the digital divide, drive internet adoption, and advance equal access for all Washingtonians to technology and its benefits.

## Advance immigration reform

Immigration has underpinned the growth of the technology industry for decades, and greater than 50 percent of venture-backed tech companies are founded by immigrants. WTIA will continue to advocate on behalf of the creation of an EB-6 entrepreneur visa and reform of the H-1B visa. These are critical pathways to attract startup founders and high-skilled workers into Washington's tech sector, as well as for the United States to effectively compete with other countries eager to recruit top tech talent.

## Strengthen our cities and communities

Policymakers must continue to make investments into our cities and communities to make them attractive places to start and grow a business. This includes critical equity and livability considerations, as well as steps to ensure communities can absorb new companies and jobs. WTIA welcomes opportunities to partner with policymakers and our members to identify actionable solutions to strengthen our cities and communities. Key areas of focus include civil liberties and social justice, public schools, affordable housing and the crisis of homelessness, transportation, and sustainability. This is not only a moral imperative, but also central to our economic vitality.

## Enact sensible online privacy regulations

Policymakers and consumers alike are increasingly focused on privacy regulations at both the federal and state levels. While WTIA supports regulating privacy at the federal level to avoid a patchwork of state regulations, states increasingly are advancing frameworks in the absence of national leadership on the issue. Privacy laws in Colorado, Virginia, and California have become de facto national standards. Related technologies and applications will likely lead to independent legislation or amendments to existing privacy law at the state level. Against this dynamic backdrop, WTIA will work with members to present an industry consensus position in response to any proposed legislation.

### Want to Learn More?

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