

# Workforce expansion

## Georgia Senate taking a deep dive into opportunities

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**Industry advocacy is one of our key pillars** to ensure your UAC dues are a worthy investment. You can see our engagement in our weekly reports when the Georgia General Assembly is in session January through March, but our work does not stop there.

The Senate Study Committee on Expanding Georgia's Workforce began meetings across the state in June. Its purpose is to examine current practices, pilot programs, private-public partnerships, and initiatives by industries across Georgia to increase workforce opportunities.

**UAC is attending these meetings, speaking with committee members and making sure our workforce challenges are part of the discussion.**

At the end of this process in November, this group will issue a final report that could lead to policy initiatives in the 2024 session of the Georgia General Assembly. Go to [www.expandinggeorgiasworkforcestudy.com](http://www.expandinggeorgiasworkforcestudy.com) for more details on the committee.



Senator John Albers

You may recall that in 2019, UAC led an effort to create a Senate Study Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Landscape Workforce Access. Chaired by former Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Wilkinson, those meetings provided industry insight on workforce challenges that were captured

in a final report on our industry discussions and suggestions. We submitted that report (<http://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/Agriculture-ForestryandLandscapeWorkforceAccessfinalreport.pdf>) to the Senate Study Committee on Expanding Georgia's Workforce and shared it with the Study Committee Chairman, Senator John Albers.

There is much to celebrate knowing so many Georgians have job opportunities, but we know UAC member businesses and others have many positions unfilled and employers are suffering. Workforce challenges facing landscape and agriculture businesses are very real. Finding workers in double-digit unemployment

was fleeting...finding workers in the current 3.2% unemployment rate is nearly impossible even with pay topping \$15 per hour for entry-level positions.

In the 2019 session of the Georgia General Assembly, the Senate Study Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Landscape Workforce Access held four meetings across the state to gather input from a variety of impacted industry interests. The work culminated with the unanimous approval of the 12-page final report that captured key points of testimony by each of the 17 speakers and a list of our recommendations.

Suggestions offered then still ring true today.

**We believe the State should develop programs to recruit workers to Georgia, help qualified businesses apply and comply with federal H-2A and H-2B guest worker visa programs, have education leaders at all levels advance career opportunities and address pathways to career development and education programs.**

UAC understands the important role federal guestworker programs provide in our industry. These necessary workers are critical parts of maintaining and growing services and products throughout the landscape and agribusiness industries. Our goal is to make sure lawmakers and thought leaders are aware of how these programs, and others, contribute to addressing workforce opportunities.

Governor Kemp rightfully states, "It is a great time to be a Georgian." Much progress has been achieved and we want to see the economy continue to grow - we need a workforce to make that happen. The Senate Study Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Landscape Workforce Access reinforced the opportunities for jobs with a variety of skills and education levels and pathways to growth, but they require commitment to action.

We will keep you informed of developments and engagement opportunities as we monitor these meetings and discussions. Finding a workforce to serve these businesses benefits all of Georgia - both urban and rural. UAC is proud to advocate industry interests on your behalf. Thank you for being a member of the Georgia Urban Agriculture Council. 🌱