Georgia fails to fully leverage the state’s most powerful economic asset—its own people. People-Powered Prosperity details a vision for how state leaders can pursue strategies to help all Georgians thrive, as well as how the state can responsibly pay for it.

Our state boasts a successful business community, but this often comes at the expense of our people. Problems and barriers to building prosperity for all Georgians persist, including low wages, sky-high costs for college and child care, the state’s health care crisis and detrimental inequities among people of color and women.

Educated youth, thriving families, healthy communities and a strong workforce are the ultimate goals of People-Powered Prosperity. Georgia needs this people-first agenda and a strategy to build a stronger, more inclusive economy.

The Georgia Budget and Policy Institute presents a roadmap to help build a more equitable, people-first Georgia.
Georgia needs a solid foundation for a strong workforce and prosperous and engaged communities. Such a foundation begins with a committed investment in early education and K-12 public schools. A high-quality education cultivates intellectual and technical skills and a deep love of learning that leads to new ideas, products and businesses, as well as richer lives. Georgia’s children deserve the opportunity to thrive in a system that recognizes the value of all educated youth. **How can Georgia meet the needs of all students?**

**Educated Youth**

- **Support Georgia’s youngest learners**
  - Increase our investment in Georgia’s pre-Kindergarten program to improve access and quality for families.

- **Update Georgia’s K-12 funding formula to meet today’s rigorous standards**
  - Revise Georgia’s K-12 funding formula to include an Opportunity Weight that provides additional money for students living in poverty, including the two out of every five students who experience homelessness, whose parents receive SNAP or TANF benefits or who are foster, migrant or unaccompanied youth.
  - Increase funds for pupil transportation, equalization and sparsity grants to support students in rural or low-income areas.

**Healthy Communities**

Part of building a strong economy that maximizes everyone’s potential is making sure people are healthy so they can contribute. People are more likely to come to work on time, get the job done right or start a small business when they can see a doctor when they are sick or access targeted services like substance abuse treatment. **How can Georgia improve health outcomes?**

- **Increase access to Medicaid and similar programs**
  - Use enhanced federal funding to fully expand Medicaid eligibility and cover nearly 500,000 uninsured Georgians.
  - Strengthen the Medicaid program by securing adequate funding, increasing reimbursement rates to make sure providers can serve people with Medicaid coverage, removing barriers to Medicaid and PeachCare enrollment and ensuring access to a comprehensive range of services.

- **Invest in all aspects of health**
  - Increase the availability and diversity of all types of health care providers across the state and expand scope of practice to allow existing providers to perform more services.
  - Sustain and build on the significant state investments in mental health and substance abuse services.
  - Invest in public health prevention programs and services to help prevent chronic diseases, maternal and infant mortality and HIV/AIDS.
Thriving Families

In Georgia, far too many children live in families who struggle financially. A strong safety net provides a bridge to economic security for families who encounter unexpected disruptions in income or lack sufficient savings to carry them through unpredictable life events. Safety net programs also improve child well-being. **How can Georgia leaders support thriving families and grow the state’s economy?**

- **Improve and defend the safety net**
  - Defend safety net programs against proposals such as work reporting requirements that limit their ability to lift millions of families above the poverty line.
  - Help families with low incomes afford quality child care by increasing state investments in the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) scholarship program.

- **Help working families improve economic outcomes**
  - Enact a Georgia Work Credit to help low- and middle-income families owe less income tax and build savings.

Strong Workforce

Most jobs require postsecondary education or training, but this requirement is out of reach for too many Georgians. We can create a more prosperous state by helping Georgians complete their degrees and credentials and ensuring people have access to good-paying jobs, prioritizing racial equity and knocking down barriers to success in school and work. Georgia is known as a leading place for business, but the state must improve education, training and employment opportunities to be a great place to work, too. **How can Georgia bolster its workforce?**

- **Make university education more affordable and technical college tuition-free**
  - Increase and sustain institutional funding to make high-quality postsecondary education and training accessible to Georgians across the state.
  - Fund a state need-based scholarship to make postsecondary success a reality for Georgians of all incomes.
  - Support tuition-free access to education and training in high-demand areas such as technical certificates, diplomas and associate degrees.
  - Support opportunities for high school students to gain early exposure to rigorous postsecondary education and training, such as Dual Enrollment.

- **Foster increased opportunities for students who have not been well served by the traditional education pipeline to gain new skills**
  - Better utilize funds for adult basic education, language literacy and skills-training programs for adults who need to retrain for the changing economy.
A Stable Revenue System

Fully funding our state’s shared priorities requires balancing Georgia’s budget with sustainable revenue sources that fairly tax residents across the state. State leaders should reverse policies that cause the lowest-income families to pay the highest percentage of their earnings in state and local taxes and should avoid costly loopholes or ineffective special-interest tax breaks.

By modernizing Georgia’s tax code and implementing common-sense policies with demonstrated success, state leaders can both increase Georgia’s ability to fund its priorities and create an equitable and adequate revenue base.

In order to achieve this goal, state leaders should:

- Preserve and strengthen the income tax for households and corporations by defending against cuts that largely benefit top earners.
- Increase the tobacco tax to the national average to raise more than $500 million in annual revenues and discourage tobacco use.
- Evaluate tax breaks for big business to trim back those that do not deliver enough benefit to offset the state’s lost revenue.
- Extend the state sales tax to cover all online purchases and some services.

What Can You Do?

A people-first agenda for Georgia is impossible without you. Take your place in the growing statewide movement to advocate for policy changes that invest in our most valuable asset, our people. Visit gbpi.org/peoplefirst to get everything you need to raise your voice and talk to your state lawmaker about this people-first agenda. You can also reach out to us to get engaged in the campaign to support People-Powered Prosperity!