
HOUSE BILL 1623

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Representatives Volz, Chapman, Walsh, Maycumber, Paul, Graham, Ryu, Chambers, Ybarra, and Barnard

1 AN ACT Relating to regional economic development visions and
2 action plans; adding a new section to chapter 43.330 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** Since the inception of the department of
6 community, trade, and economic development in 1993, the forerunner of
7 today's department of commerce, Washington has assigned
8 responsibilities to the department for increasing economic
9 development and developing economic strategies in cooperation with
10 the legislature and the governor. Since 2005, Washington has
11 maintained a list of distressed areas, which include, but are not
12 limited to, counties with an unemployment rate more than 20 percent
13 higher than the statewide unemployment rate for the previous three
14 years. The legislature finds that numerous counties outside of the
15 central Puget Sound region have been persistently categorized as
16 distressed based on their unemployment rates. The legislature finds
17 that regional economic development visions and action plans should be
18 developed in partnership with local businesses and local civic
19 leadership specific to these distressed areas experiencing
20 persistently higher than average unemployment.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.330
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
4 specific purpose, by December 1, 2024, and every 10 years thereafter,
5 the department shall lead and facilitate the development of a
6 regional economic development vision and action plan for each region
7 of the state that includes a county that is eligible to be
8 categorized as a distressed area under RCW 43.168.020 due to its
9 unemployment rate. There must be at least five regional vision and
10 action plans completed, with the boundaries of the regions to be
11 determined at the discretion of the department after outreach to
12 affected communities.

13 (2) The purpose of each regional economic development vision and
14 action plan is to assist with synchronizing local government policies
15 and actions, and to guide and inform state funding and policies
16 connected to the economic development objectives. No regional
17 economic development action plan shall have the force of law or
18 compel any local or state action.

19 (3) In developing the vision and action plan, the department
20 shall coordinate with local associate development organizations,
21 local government officials, the private sector business community,
22 nonprofit organizations, and local labor organizations. The
23 department shall survey the local community with respect to their
24 goals for the future of the local economy.

25 (4) The department shall call upon and receive the cooperation of
26 other state agencies for research and analysis that may be needed to
27 fulfill the requirements of this section.

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