SENATE BILL 6695

State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session

By Senators Liias and Warnick

AN ACT Relating to broadening the eligibility requirements and extending the expiration date for the data center tax incentive; amending RCW 82.08.986 and 82.12.986; creating new sections; and providing expiration dates.

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

6 NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. (1) The legislature finds that the data center industry is experiencing explosive growth across the nation 7 and the competition among states for data center investments has 8 increased dramatically. A department of commerce study, 2018 State of 9 10 the Data Center Industry, An Analysis of Washington's Competitiveness, found that data center growth in rural Washington is 11 12 at the lower end of the growth rate experienced by other major competitive markets. If the state desires to attract more projects, 13 Washington should improve its promotional strategy for this industry 14 15 segment and reexamine the competitiveness of its overall incentives 16 strategy.

17 (2) The legislature intends to encourage additional investments 18 in data technology facilities that in turn incentivize local economic 19 development, increased local tax revenues, and rural construction and 20 trade jobs through the development of additional data center 21 facilities. <u>NEW SECTION.</u> Sec. 2. (1) This section is the tax preference performance statement for the tax preferences contained in sections 3 and 4, chapter . . ., Laws of 2020 (sections 3 and 4 of this act). This performance statement is only intended to be used for subsequent evaluation of the tax preferences. It is not intended to create a private right of action by any party or be used to determine eligibility for preferential tax treatment.

(2) The legislature categorizes the sales and use tax exemptions 8 on eligible server equipment and eligible power infrastructure 9 equipment at eligible computer data centers as ones intended to: 10 11 Induce certain designated behavior by taxpayers as indicated in RCW 12 82.32.808(2)(a); improve industry competitiveness as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(b); create or retain jobs 13 as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(c); and reduce structural inefficiencies in the tax 14 structure as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(d). 15

16 (3) It is the legislature's specific public policy objective to 17 maintain and grow the existing data center sector in Washington 18 state, and encourage development of new data center facilities and 19 refurbishment of existing data centers, thereby increasing the 20 competitiveness of Washington's tax structure, which will increase or 21 maintain construction and trade job growth in rural areas, and 22 increase local tax revenue streams.

23 (4) The legislature intends to extend the expiration date of the 24 tax preference if a review finds that the tax preference is (a) 25 generating capital investment in new computer data centers, 26 refurbished data centers, and existing data centers (e.g. replacement 27 server equipment), (b) generating state and local tax collections 28 from data center investment and operations, and (c) generating construction and trade jobs in the state. The review must factor in 29 changing economic conditions. 30

31 (5) In order to obtain the data necessary to perform the review 32 in subsection (4) of this section, the joint legislative audit and 33 review committee may refer to any available data source, including 34 data available from the department of revenue regarding rural county 35 property tax assessments and employment data from the employment 36 security department.

37 Sec. 3. RCW 82.08.986 and 2017 c 135 s 26 are each amended to 38 read as follows: 1 (1)(a) An exemption from the tax imposed by RCW 82.08.020 is 2 provided for sales to qualifying businesses and to qualifying tenants 3 of eligible server equipment to be installed, without intervening 4 use, in an eligible computer data center to which a valid exemption 5 certificate applies, and to charges made for labor and services 6 rendered in respect to installing eligible server equipment. ((Until 7 January 1, 2026, the))

8 (b) This exemption also applies to sales to qualifying businesses 9 and to qualifying tenants of eligible power infrastructure, including 10 labor and services rendered in respect to constructing, installing, 11 repairing, altering, or improving eligible power infrastructure <u>at an</u> 12 <u>eligible computer data center for which an exemption certificate has</u> 13 <u>been issued.</u>

14 (c) No new exemption certificates may be issued on or after July 15 <u>1, 2035.</u>

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(d) The exemptions provided in this section expire July 1, 2047.

17 (2) (a) In order to ((claim the exemption)) obtain an exemption certificate under this section, a qualifying business or a qualifying 18 19 tenant must submit an application to the department for an exemption certificate. The application must include the information necessary, 20 21 as required by the department, to determine that a business or tenant qualifies for the exemption under this section. The department must 22 23 issue exemption certificates to qualifying businesses and qualifying tenants. The department may assign a unique identification number to 24 25 each exemption certificate issued under this section.

(b) A qualifying business or a qualifying tenant claiming the exemption under this section must present the seller with an exemption certificate in a form and manner prescribed by the department. The seller must retain a copy of the certificate for the seller's files.

31 (C) With respect to computer data centers for which the commencement of construction occurs after July 1, 2015, but before 32 July 1, 2019, the exemption provided in this section is limited to no 33 more than eight computer data centers, with total eligible data 34 centers provided under this section limited to twelve from July 1, 35 2015, through ((July 1, 2025)) the effective date of this section. 36 Tenants of qualified data centers do not constitute additional data 37 centers under the limit. The exemption is available on a first-in-38 39 time basis based on the date the application required under this 40 section is received by the department.

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1 <u>(d) The exemption certificate is effective on the date the</u> 2 <u>application is received by the department, which is deemed to be the</u> 3 <u>date of issuance. Only purchases on or after the date of issuance</u> 4 <u>qualify for the exemption under this section. No tax refunds are</u> 5 <u>authorized for purchases made before the effective date of the</u> 6 <u>exemption certificate.</u>

7 <u>(e)</u> Exemption certificates expire two years after the date of 8 issuance, unless construction has been commenced.

9 (3)(a) Within six years of the date that the department issued an 10 exemption certificate under this section to a qualifying business or 11 a qualifying tenant with respect to an eligible computer data center, 12 the qualifying business or qualifying tenant must establish that net 13 employment at the eligible computer data center has increased by a 14 minimum of:

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(i) Thirty-five family wage employment positions; or

16 (ii) Three family wage employment positions for each twenty 17 thousand square feet of space or less that is newly dedicated to 18 housing working servers at the eligible computer data center. For 19 qualifying tenants, the number of family wage employment positions 20 that must be increased under this subsection (3)(a)(ii) is based only 21 on the space occupied by the qualifying tenant in the eligible 22 computer data center.

23 (b) In calculating the net increase in family wage employment 24 positions:

(i) The owner of an eligible computer data center, in addition to its own net increase in family wage employment positions, may include:

(A) The net increase, since the date of issuance of the
 <u>qualifying business's exemption certificate</u>, in family wage
 employment positions employed by qualifying tenants; and

31 (B) The net increase in family wage employment positions 32 described in (c)(ii)(B) of this subsection (3).

33 (ii) (A) Qualifying tenants, in addition to their own net increase 34 in family wage employment positions, may include:

35 (I) A portion of the net increase in family wage employment 36 positions employed by the owner; and

37 (II) A portion of the net increase in family wage employment 38 positions described in (c)(ii)(B) of this subsection (3).

(B) The portion of the net increase in family wage employmentpositions to be counted under this subsection (3)(b)(ii) by each

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1 qualifying tenant ((must be in proportion to the amount of space in the eligible computer data center occupied by the qualifying tenant 2 3 compared to the total amount of space in the eligible computer data 4 center occupied by all qualifying tenants)) is equal to the net increase in family wage employment positions at the eligible computer 5 6 data center as described in (b) (ii) (A) (I) and (II) of this subsection (3), multiplied by the percentage of total space within the eligible 7 computer data center occupied by the qualifying tenant. Any 8 combination of qualifying business and qualifying tenant family wage 9 10 employment positions may meet this requirement.

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(c)(i) For purposes of this subsection(($_{\tau}$)):

12 <u>(A) For exemption certificates issued before the effective date</u> 13 <u>of this section, family wage employment positions are new permanent</u> 14 employment positions requiring forty hours of weekly work, or their 15 equivalent, on a full-time basis at the eligible computer data center 16 and receiving a wage equivalent to or greater than one hundred fifty 17 percent of the per capita personal income of the county in which the 18 qualified project is located.

19 <u>(B) For exemption certificates issued on or after the effective</u> 20 <u>date of this section, family wage employment positions are new</u> 21 <u>permanent employment positions requiring forty hours of weekly work,</u> 22 <u>or their equivalent, on a full-time basis at the eligible computer</u> 23 <u>data center and receiving a wage equivalent to or greater than one</u> 24 <u>hundred twenty-five percent of the per capita personal income of the</u> 25 <u>county in which the qualified project is located.</u>

26 <u>(C)</u> An employment position may not be counted as a family wage 27 employment position unless the employment position is entitled to 28 health insurance coverage provided by the employer of the employment 29 position. ((For purposes of this subsection (3)(c), "new))

30 <u>(D) "New</u> permanent employment position" means an employment 31 position that did not exist or that had not previously been filled as 32 of the date that the department issued an exemption certificate to 33 the ((owner)) <u>qualifying business</u> or qualifying tenant of an eligible 34 computer data center, as the case may be.

(ii) (A) Family wage employment positions include positions filled by employees of the ((owner of the eligible computer data center)) <u>qualifying business</u> and by employees of qualifying tenants.

(B) Family wage employment positions also include individuals
 performing work at an eligible computer data center as an independent
 contractor hired by the owner of the eligible computer data center or

as an employee of an independent contractor hired by the owner of the eligible computer data center, if the work is necessary for the operation of the computer data center, such as security and building maintenance, and provided that all of the requirements in (c)(i) of this subsection (3) are met.

6 (d) ((All)) For a qualifying business or qualifying tenant that 7 does not meet the requirements of this subsection (3), all previously 8 exempted sales and use taxes are immediately due and payable ((for a 9 qualifying business or qualifying tenant that does not meet the 10 requirements of this subsection)) and any exemption certificate 11 issued to that qualifying business or qualifying tenant under this 12 section is canceled.

13 (4) A qualifying business or a qualifying tenant claiming an 14 exemption under this section or RCW 82.12.986 must complete an annual 15 tax performance report with the department as required under RCW 16 82.32.534.

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(5)(((a) The exemption provided in this section does not apply to:

19 (i) Any person who has received the benefit of the deferral 20 program under chapter 82.60 RCW on: (A) The construction, renovation, 21 or expansion of a structure or structures used as a computer data 22 center; or (B) machinery or equipment used in a computer data center; 23 and

24 (ii) Any person affiliated with a person within the scope of 25 (a) (i) of this subsection (5).

(b) If a person claims an exemption under this section and 26 27 subsequently receives the benefit of the deferral program under 28 chapter 82.60 RCW on either the construction, renovation, or expansion of a structure or structures used as a computer data center 29 30 or machinery or equipment used in a computer data center, the person 31 must repay the amount of taxes exempted under this section. Interest 32 as provided in chapter 82.32 RCW applies to amounts due under this section until paid in full.)) The certificate holder may not at any 33 34 time assign or transfer a certificate without the prior written 35 consent of the department. The department must allow certificate transfers if the certificate holder meets the following requirements: 36 (a) The certificate assignee or transferee is qualified to do 37 business in the state; 38

39 (b) The assignee or transferee acknowledges the transfer of the 40 certificate in writing;

1	<u>(c) The assignee or transferee agrees to keep and perform all the</u>
2	terms of the certificates; and
3	(d) An assignment or transfer of the certificate is to an entity
4	that:
5	(i) Controls, is controlled by, or under common control with, the
6	certificate holder;
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8	the certificate holder; or
9	(iii) Is the resulting entity of a merger or consolidation with
10	the certificate holder.
11	(6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
12	section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.
13	(a) "Affiliated" means that one person has a direct or indirect
14	ownership interest of at least twenty percent in another person.
15	(b) "Building" means a fully enclosed structure with a weather
16	resistant exterior wall envelope or concrete or masonry walls
17	designed in accordance with the requirements for structures under
18	chapter 19.27 RCW. This definition of "building" only applies to
19	computer data centers for which commencement of construction occurs
20	on or after July 1, 2015.
21	(c) <u>"Certificate of occupancy" means:</u>
22	(i) For a newly constructed eligible computer data center, the
23	certificate of occupancy issued by a local governing authority for
24	the structure or structures which comprise the eligible computer data
25	<u>center; or</u>
26	(ii) For renovations of an eligible computer data center, the
27	certificate of occupancy issued by a local governing authority for
28	the renovated structure or structures that comprise the eligible
29	computer data center.
30	<u>(d)</u> (i) "Computer data center" means a facility comprised of one
31	or more buildings, which may be comprised of multiple businesses,
32	constructed or refurbished specifically, and used primarily, to house
33	working servers, where the facility has the following
34	characteristics: (A) Uninterruptible power supplies, generator backup
35	power, or both; (B) sophisticated fire suppression and prevention
36	systems; and (C) enhanced physical security, such as: Restricted
37	access to the facility to selected personnel; permanent security
38	guards; video camera surveillance; an electronic system requiring
39	passcodes, keycards, or biometric scans, such as hand scans and
40	retinal or fingerprint recognition; or similar security features.
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1 (ii) For a computer data center comprised of multiple buildings, 2 each separate building constructed or refurbished specifically, and 3 used primarily, to house working servers is considered a computer 4 data center if it has all of the characteristics listed in ((-+))5 <u>(d)</u>(i)(A) through (C) of this subsection (6).

6 (iii) A facility comprised of one building or more than one 7 building must have a combined square footage of at least one hundred 8 thousand square feet.

9 (((d))) <u>(e)</u> "Electronic data storage and data management 10 services" include, but are not limited to: Providing data storage and 11 backup services, providing computer processing power, hosting 12 enterprise software applications, and hosting web sites. The term 13 also includes providing services such as email, web browsing and 14 searching, media applications, and other online services, regardless 15 of whether a charge is made for such services.

16 (((e))) <u>(f)</u>(i) "Eligible computer data center" means a computer 17 data center:

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(A) Located in a rural county as defined in RCW 82.14.370;

(B) Having at least twenty thousand square feet dedicated to housing working servers((, where the server space has not previously been dedicated to housing working servers)); and

(C) For which the commencement of construction occurs:

(I) After March 31, 2010, and before July 1, 2011;

24 (II) After March 31, 2012, and before July 1, 2015; or

25 (III) After June 30, 2015, and before July 1, ((2025)) <u>2035</u>.

26 (ii) For purposes of this section, "commencement of construction" 27 means the date that a building permit is issued under the building code adopted under RCW 19.27.031 for construction of the computer 28 29 data center. The construction of a computer data center includes the expansion, renovation, or ((other improvements made to)) 30 31 refurbishment of existing facilities, including leased or rented 32 space. "Commencement of construction" does not include soil testing, 33 site clearing and grading, site preparation, or any other related activities that are initiated before the issuance of a building 34 permit for the construction of the foundation of a computer data 35 36 center.

37 (((iii) With respect to facilities in existence on April 1, 2010, 38 that are expanded, renovated, or otherwise improved after March 31, 39 2010, or facilities in existence on April 1, 2012, that are expanded, 40 renovated, or otherwise improved after March 31, 2012, or facilities in existence on July 1, 2015, that are expanded, renovated, or otherwise improved after June 30, 2015, an eligible computer data center includes only the portion of the computer data center meeting the requirements in (e)(i)(B) of this subsection (6).

(f))) (g) "Eligible power infrastructure" means all fixtures and 5 6 equipment owned by a qualifying business or qualifying tenant and 7 necessary for the transformation, distribution, or management of electricity that is required to operate eligible server equipment 8 within an eligible computer data center. 9 The term includes generators; wiring; cogeneration equipment; and associated fixtures 10 11 and equipment, such as electrical switches, batteries, and 12 distribution, testing, and monitoring equipment. The term does not include substations. 13

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(((g))) <u>(h)</u> "Eligible server equipment" means:

15 (i) For a qualifying business whose computer data center 16 qualifies as an eligible computer data center under (((++))) (f) 17 (i)(C)(I) of this subsection (6), the original server equipment 18 installed in an eligible computer data center on or after April 1, 19 2010, and before ((January 1, 2026)) July 1, 2035, and replacement 20 server equipment. For purposes of this subsection (6)(((++))) (h)(i), 21 "replacement server equipment" means server equipment that:

(A) Replaces existing server equipment, if the sale or use of the
 server equipment to be replaced qualified for an exemption under this
 section or RCW 82.12.986; and

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(B) Is installed and put into regular use before April 1, 2018.

26 (ii) For a qualifying business whose computer data center qualifies as an eligible computer data center under (((e))) <u>(f)</u> 27 28 (i)(C)(II) of this subsection (6), "eligible server equipment" means 29 the original server equipment installed in an eligible computer data center on or after April 1, 2012, and before ((January 1, 2026)) July 30 31 1, 2035, and replacement server equipment. For purposes of this 32 subsection (6)(((g))) (h)(ii), "replacement server equipment" means 33 server equipment that:

(A) Replaces existing server equipment, if the sale or use of the
 server equipment to be replaced qualified for an exemption under this
 section or RCW 82.12.986; and

(B) Is installed and put into regular use before ((April 1, 38 2024)) July 1, 2035.

39 (iii) (((A))) For a qualifying business whose computer data center 40 qualifies as an eligible computer data center under ((((e)))) (f) 1 (i)(C)(III) of this subsection (6), "eligible server equipment" means the original server equipment installed in a building within an 2 eligible computer data center on or after July 1, 2015, and before 3 July 1, 2035, and replacement server equipment. Server equipment 4 installed in movable or fixed stand-alone, prefabricated, or modular 5 6 units, including intermodal shipping containers, is not "directly installed in a building." For purposes of this subsection $(6)((\frac{1}{2}))$ 7 (h) (iii) (((A))), "replacement server equipment" means server 8 equipment that ((replaces)): 9

10 <u>(A)(I) Replaces</u> existing server equipment, if the sale or use of 11 the server equipment to be replaced qualified for an exemption under 12 this section or RCW 82.12.986; <u>or</u>

(II) Replaces existing server equipment in a computer data center that meets the following requirements: Was ineligible before the effective date of this section for the exemptions provided under this section and RCW 82.12.986; has been refurbished; and to which a valid exemption certificate applies; and

(B) Is installed and put into regular use no later than twelve
years after the date of the certificate of occupancy <u>or completion of</u>
<u>refurbishment of the computer data center</u>.

(iv) For a qualifying tenant who leases space within an eligible 21 computer data center, "eligible server equipment" means the original 22 23 server equipment installed within the space it leases from an eligible computer data center with an exemption certificate on or 24 25 after April 1, 2010, and before ((January 1, 2026)) July 1, 2035, and 26 replacement server equipment. For purposes of this subsection (6) 27 (((q))) (h)(iv), "replacement server equipment" means server 28 equipment that:

(A) (I) Replaces existing server equipment, if the sale or use of
the server equipment to be replaced qualified for an exemption under
this section or RCW 82.12.986 and is installed and put into regular
use before July 1, 2035; or

33 <u>(II) Replaces existing server equipment in a computer data center</u> 34 <u>that meets the following requirements: Was ineligible before the</u> 35 <u>effective date of this section for the exemptions provided under this</u> 36 <u>section and RCW 82.12.986; has been refurbished; and to which a valid</u> 37 <u>exemption certificate applies;</u>

(B) Is installed and put into regular use ((before April 1,
 2024)) no later than twelve years after the date of the certificate

1 of occupancy or completion of refurbishment of the computer data

2 <u>center</u>; and

3 (C) For tenants leasing space in an eligible computer data center 4 built after July 1, 2015, is installed and put into regular use no 5 later than twelve years after the date of the certificate of 6 occupancy.

((((h))) (i) "Qualifying business" means a business entity that 7 exists for the primary purpose of engaging in commercial activity for 8 profit and that is the owner of an eligible computer data center. The 9 term does not include the state or federal government or any of their 10 11 departments, agencies, and institutions; tribal governments; 12 political subdivisions of this state; or any municipal, quasimunicipal, public, or other corporation created by the state or 13 14 federal government, tribal government, municipality, or political subdivision of the state. 15

(((-i))) (j) "Qualifying tenant" means a business entity that 16 17 exists for the primary purpose of engaging in commercial activity for 18 profit and that leases space from a qualifying business within an 19 eligible computer data center. The term does not include the state or federal government or any of their departments, agencies, and 20 21 institutions; tribal governments; political subdivisions of this 22 state; or any municipal, quasi-municipal, public, or other 23 corporation created by the state or federal government, tribal government, municipality, or political subdivision of the state. The 24 25 term also does not include a lessee of space in an eligible computer 26 data center under (((+))) (f) (i) (C) (I) of this subsection (6), if the lessee and lessor are affiliated and: 27

(i) That space will be used by the lessee to house server equipment that replaces server equipment previously installed and operated in that eligible computer data center by the lessor or another person affiliated with the lessee; or

32 (ii) Prior to May 2, 2012, the primary use of the server 33 equipment installed in that eligible computer data center was to 34 provide electronic data storage and data management services for the 35 business purposes of either the lessor, persons affiliated with the 36 lessor, or both.

37 ((((j))) <u>(k)(i) "Refurbished" or "refurbishment" means a</u> 38 <u>substantial improvement to an eligible computer data center for which</u> 39 <u>a certificate of occupancy is not issued. Such an improvement must</u> 1 <u>update or modernize servers, server space, ventilation, or power</u> 2 <u>infrastructure in an eligible computer data center.</u>

3 <u>(ii) For a qualifying computer data center to be considered</u> 4 refurbished, the qualifying business must certify, in a form and 5 manner prescribed by the department, that the refurbishment of an 6 eligible computer data center is complete. The refurbishment is 7 considered complete on the date that the improved portion of the 8 computer data center is operationally complete and able to be used 9 for its intended purpose.

(1) "Server equipment" means the computer hardware located in an 10 eligible computer data center and used exclusively to provide 11 12 electronic data storage and data management services for internal use by the owner or lessee of the computer data center, for clients of 13 14 the owner or lessee of the computer data center, or both. "Server equipment" also includes computer software necessary to operate the 15 16 computer hardware. "Server equipment" does not include personal 17 computers, the racks upon which the server equipment is installed, 18 and computer peripherals such as keyboards, monitors, printers, and 19 mice.

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(7) This section expires July 1, 2047.

21 Sec. 4. RCW 82.12.986 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 303 are each 22 amended to read as follows:

(1) (a) An exemption from the tax imposed by RCW 82.12.020 is provided for the use by qualifying businesses or qualifying tenants of eligible server equipment to be installed, without intervening use, in an eligible computer data center <u>for which an exemption</u> <u>certificate under RCW 82.08.986 has been issued</u>, and to the use of labor and services rendered in respect to installing such server equipment.

30 ((The)) (b) This exemption also applies to the use by a 31 qualifying business or qualifying tenant of eligible power 32 infrastructure, including labor and services rendered in respect to 33 installing, repairing, altering, or improving such infrastructure <u>at</u> 34 <u>an eligible computer data center for which an exemption certificate</u> 35 <u>under RCW 82.08.986 has been issued.</u>

36 (c) The exemptions provided in this section expire July 1, 2047.

37 (2) A qualifying business or a qualifying tenant is not eligible38 for the exemption under this section unless the department issued an

exemption certificate to the qualifying business or a qualifying
 tenant for the exemption provided in RCW 82.08.986.

3 (3)(((a) The exemption provided in this section does not apply
4 to:

5 (i) Any person who has received the benefit of the deferral 6 program under chapter 82.60 RCW on: (A) The construction, renovation, 7 or expansion of a structure or structures used as a computer data 8 center; or (B) machinery or equipment used in a computer data center; 9 and

10 (ii) Any person affiliated with a person within the scope of 11 (a) (i) of this subsection (3).

(b) If a person has received the benefit of the exemption under 12 13 this section and subsequently receives the benefit of the deferral program under chapter 82.60 RCW on either the construction, 14 15 renovation, or expansion of a structure or structures used as a 16 computer data center or machinery or equipment used in a computer 17 data center, the person must repay the amount of taxes exempted under this section. Interest as provided in chapter 82.32 RCW applies to 18 19 amounts due under this subsection (3) (b) until paid in full. A person is not required to repay taxes under this subsection with respect to 20 property and services for which the person is required to repay taxes 21 under RCW 82.08.986(5). 22 23 (4))) The definitions and requirements in RCW 82.08.986 apply to

- 24 this section.
- 25 (4) This section expires July 1, 2047.

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