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HOUSE BILL 1459

State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session

By Representatives Ybarra, Chapman, Stokesbary, Sutherland, and Dent Read first time 02/02/21. Referred to Committee on Finance.

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 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.

(2) The legislature intends to encourage additional investments in data technology facilities that in turn incentivize local economic development, increased local tax revenues, and rural construction and trade jobs through the development of additional data center facilities.

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NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. (1) This section is the tax preference performance statement for the tax preferences contained in sections 3 and 4, chapter . . ., Laws of 2021 (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 on eligible server equipment and eligible power infrastructure equipment at eligible computer data centers as ones intended to: Induce certain designated behavior by taxpayers as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(a); improve industry competitiveness as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(b); create or retain jobs as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(c); and reduce structural inefficiencies in the tax structure as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(d).
- (3) It is the legislature's specific public policy objective to maintain and grow the existing data center sector in Washington state, and encourage development of new data center facilities and refurbishment of existing data centers, thereby increasing the competitiveness of Washington's tax structure, which will increase or maintain construction and trade job growth in rural areas, and increase local tax revenue streams.
- (4) The legislature intends to extend the expiration date of the tax preference if a review finds that the tax preference is (a) generating capital investment in new computer data centers, refurbished data centers, and existing data centers (e.g., replacement server equipment), (b) generating state and local tax collections from data center investment and operations, and (c) generating construction and trade jobs in the state. The review must factor in changing economic conditions.
- (5) In order to obtain the data necessary to perform the review in subsection (4) of this section, the joint legislative audit and review committee may refer to any available data source, including data available from the department of revenue regarding rural county property tax assessments and employment data from the employment security department.
- **Sec. 3.** RCW 82.08.986 and 2017 c 135 s 26 are each amended to 38 read as follows:

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(1) (a) An exemption from the tax imposed by RCW 82.08.020 is provided for sales to qualifying businesses and to qualifying tenants of eligible server equipment to be installed, without intervening use, in an eligible computer data center to which a valid exemption certificate applies, and to charges made for labor and services rendered in respect to installing eligible server equipment. ((Until January 1, 2026, the))

- (b) This exemption also applies to sales to qualifying businesses and to qualifying tenants of eligible power infrastructure, including labor and services rendered in respect to constructing, installing, repairing, altering, or improving eligible power infrastructure at an eligible computer data center for which an exemption certificate has been issued.
- 14 <u>(c) No new exemption certificates may be issued on or after July</u>
 15 <u>1, 2035.</u>
 - (d) The exemptions provided in this section expire July 1, 2047.
 - (2) (a) In order to ((claim the exemption)) obtain an exemption certificate under this section, a qualifying business or a qualifying tenant must submit an application to the department for an exemption certificate. The application must include the information necessary, as required by the department, to determine that a business or tenant qualifies for the exemption under this section. The department must issue exemption certificates to qualifying businesses and qualifying tenants. The department may assign a unique identification number to 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.
- (C) With respect to computer data centers for which commencement of construction occurs after July 1, 2015, but before July 1, 2019, the exemption provided in this section is limited to no more than eight computer data centers, with total eligible data centers provided under this section limited to twelve from July 1, 2015, through ((July 1, 2025)) the effective date of this section. Tenants of qualified data centers do not constitute additional data centers under the limit. The exemption is available on a first-in-time basis based on the date the application required under this section is received by the department.

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(d) The exemption certificate is effective on the date the application is received by the department, which is deemed to be the date of issuance. Only purchases on or after the date of issuance qualify for the exemption under this section. No tax refunds are authorized for purchases made before the effective date of the exemption certificate.

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- (e) Exemption certificates expire two years after the date of issuance, unless construction has been commenced.
- (3) (a) Within six years of the date that the department issued an exemption certificate under this section to a qualifying business or a qualifying tenant with respect to an eligible computer data center, the qualifying business or qualifying tenant must establish that net employment at the eligible computer data center has increased by a minimum of:
 - (i) Thirty-five family wage employment positions; or
- (ii) Three family wage employment positions for each twenty thousand square feet of space or less that is newly dedicated to housing working servers at the eligible computer data center. For qualifying tenants, the number of family wage employment positions that must be increased under this subsection (3)(a)(ii) is based only on the space occupied by the qualifying tenant in the eligible 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 qualifying business's exemption certificate, 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).
- 39 (B) The portion of the net increase in family wage employment 40 positions to be counted under this subsection (3)(b)(ii) by each

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- qualifying tenant ((must be in proportion to the amount of space in the eligible computer data center occupied by the qualifying tenant compared to the total amount of space in the eligible computer data center occupied by all qualifying tenants)) is equal to the net increase in family wage employment positions at the eligible computer 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 computer data center occupied by the qualifying tenant. Any combination of qualifying business and qualifying tenant family wage employment positions may meet this requirement.
 - (c) (i) For purposes of this subsection $((\tau))$:

- (A) For exemption certificates issued before the effective date of this section, family wage employment positions are new permanent employment positions requiring forty hours of weekly work, or their equivalent, on a full-time basis at the eligible computer data center and receiving a wage equivalent to or greater than one hundred fifty percent of the per capita personal income of the county in which the qualified project is located.
- (B) For exemption certificates issued on or after the effective date of this section, family wage employment positions are new permanent employment positions requiring 40 hours of weekly work, or their equivalent, on a full-time basis at the eligible computer data center and receiving a wage equivalent to or greater than 125 percent of the per capita personal income of the county in which the qualified project is located.
- (C) An employment position may not be counted as a family wage employment position unless the employment position is entitled to health insurance coverage provided by the employer of the employment position. ((For purposes of this subsection (3)(c), "new))
- (D) "New permanent employment position" means an employment position that did not exist or that had not previously been filled as of the date that the department issued an exemption certificate to the ((ewner)) qualifying business or qualifying tenant of an eligible 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)) qualifying business 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

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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.

- (d) ((All)) For a qualifying business or qualifying tenant that does not meet the requirements of this subsection (3), all previously exempted sales and use taxes are immediately due and payable ((for a qualifying business or qualifying tenant that does not meet the requirements of this subsection)) and any exemption certificate issued to that qualifying business or qualifying tenant under this section is canceled.
- (4) A qualifying business or a qualifying tenant claiming an exemption under this section or RCW 82.12.986 must complete an annual tax performance report with the department as required under RCW 82.32.534.
- (5)((\(\frac{a}{a}\)) The exemption provided in this section does not apply to:
 - (i) Any person who has received the benefit of the deferral program under chapter 82.60 RCW on: (A) The construction, renovation, or expansion of a structure or structures used as a computer data center; or (B) machinery or equipment used in a computer data center; and
 - (ii) Any person affiliated with a person within the scope of (a)(i) of this subsection (5).
 - (b) If a person claims an exemption under this section and subsequently receives the benefit of the deferral program under chapter 82.60 RCW on either the construction, renovation, or expansion of a structure or structures used as a computer data center or machinery or equipment used in a computer data center, the person must repay the amount of taxes exempted under this section. Interest 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 time assign or transfer a certificate without the prior written consent of the department. The department must allow certificate transfers if the certificate holder meets the following requirements:
- 37 <u>(a) The certificate assignee or transferee is qualified to do</u> 38 business in the state;
- 39 <u>(b) The assignee or transferee acknowledges the transfer of the</u> 40 certificate in writing;

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- 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 <u>(i) Controls, is controlled by, or under common control with, the</u> 6 <u>certificate holder;</u>
 - (ii) Acquires all or substantially all of the stock or assets of the certificate holder; or
- 9 <u>(iii)</u> Is the resulting entity of a merger or consolidation with the certificate holder.
 - (6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.
 - (a) "Affiliated" means that one person has a direct or indirect ownership interest of at least twenty percent in another person.
 - (b) "Building" means a fully enclosed structure with a weather resistant exterior wall envelope or concrete or masonry walls designed in accordance with the requirements for structures under chapter 19.27 RCW. This definition of "building" only applies to computer data centers for which commencement of construction occurs on or after July 1, 2015.
 - (c) "Certificate of occupancy" means:

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- (i) For a newly constructed eligible computer data center, the certificate of occupancy issued by a local governing authority for the structure or structures which comprise the eligible computer data center; or
- (ii) For renovations of an eligible computer data center, the certificate of occupancy issued by a local governing authority for the renovated structure or structures that comprise the eligible computer data center.
- (d)(i) "Computer data center" means a facility comprised of one or more buildings, which may be comprised of multiple businesses, constructed or refurbished specifically, and used primarily, to house workina servers, where the facility has the following characteristics: (A) Uninterruptible power supplies, generator backup power, or both; (B) sophisticated fire suppression and prevention systems; and (C) enhanced physical security, such as: Restricted access to the facility to selected personnel; permanent security quards; video camera surveillance; an electronic system requiring passcodes, keycards, or biometric scans, such as hand scans and retinal or fingerprint recognition; or similar security features.

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(ii) For a computer data center comprised of multiple buildings, each separate building constructed or refurbished specifically, and used primarily, to house working servers is considered a computer data center if it has all of the characteristics listed in ((-(e))) (d)(i)(A) through (C) of this subsection (6).

- (iii) A facility comprised of one building or more than one building must have a combined square footage of at least one hundred thousand square feet.
- (((d))) <u>(e)</u> "Electronic data storage and data management services" include, but are not limited to: Providing data storage and backup services, providing computer processing power, hosting enterprise software applications, and hosting web sites. The term also includes providing services such as email, web browsing and searching, media applications, and other online services, regardless of whether a charge is made for such services.
- $((\frac{(e)}{(e)}))$ <u>(f)</u> (i) "Eligible computer data center" means a computer 17 data center:
 - (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;
 - (II) After March 31, 2012, and before July 1, 2015; or
 - (III) After June 30, 2015, and before July 1, ((2025)) 2035.
 - (ii) For purposes of this section, "commencement of construction" means the date that a building permit is issued under the building code adopted under RCW 19.27.031 for construction of the computer data center. The construction of a computer data center includes the expansion, renovation, or ((other improvements made to)) refurbishment of existing facilities, including leased or rented space. "Commencement of construction" does not include soil testing, site clearing and grading, site preparation, or any other related activities that are initiated before the issuance of a building permit for the construction of the foundation of a computer data center.
 - (((iii) With respect to facilities in existence on April 1, 2010, that are expanded, renovated, or otherwise improved after March 31, 2010, or facilities in existence on April 1, 2012, that are expanded, renovated, or otherwise improved after March 31, 2012, or facilities

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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 equipment owned by a qualifying business or qualifying tenant and necessary for the transformation, distribution, or management of electricity that is required to operate eligible server equipment within an eligible computer data center. The term includes generators; wiring; cogeneration equipment; and associated fixtures and equipment, such as electrical switches, batteries, and distribution, testing, and monitoring equipment. The term does not include substations.

 $((\frac{g}{g}))$ (h) "Eligible server equipment" means:

- (i) For a qualifying business whose computer data center qualifies as an eligible computer data center under $((\frac{1}{2}))$ (f) (i) (C) (I) of this subsection (6), the original server equipment installed in an eligible computer data center on or after April 1, 2010, and before $((\frac{1}{2}))$ July 1, 2035, and replacement server equipment. For purposes of this subsection $(6)((\frac{1}{2}))$ (h) (i), "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
 - (B) Is installed and put into regular use before April 1, 2018.
- (ii) For a qualifying business whose computer data center qualifies as an eligible computer data center under $((\frac{(++)}{(++)}))$ (f) (i) (C) (II) of this subsection (6), "eligible server equipment" means the original server equipment installed in an eligible computer data center on or after April 1, 2012, and before $((\frac{3}{4} + 2026))$ July 1, 2035, and replacement server equipment. For purposes of this subsection (6) $((\frac{(++)}{(++)}))$ (h) (ii), "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
- 37 (B) Is installed and put into regular use before ((April 1_r 38 $\frac{2024}{}$)) July $1_r = \frac{2035}{}$.
- (iii) $((\frac{A}{A}))$ For a qualifying business whose computer data center qualifies as an eligible computer data center under $((\frac{A}{A}))$

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- (i)(C)(III) of this subsection (6), "eligible server equipment" means the original server equipment installed in a building within an eligible computer data center on or after July 1, 2015, and before July 1, 2035, and replacement server equipment. Server equipment installed in movable or fixed stand-alone, prefabricated, or modular units, including intermodal shipping containers, is not "directly installed in a building." For purposes of this subsection (6) $((\frac{1}{2}))$ (h)(iii)(((A))), "replacement server equipment" means server equipment that ((replaces)):
- (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; or

- (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 or completion of refurbishment of the computer data center.
- (iv) For a qualifying tenant who leases space within an eligible computer data center, "eligible server equipment" means the original server equipment installed within the space it leases from an eligible computer data center with an exemption certificate on or after April 1, 2010, and before ((January 1, 2026)) July 1, 2035, and replacement server equipment. For purposes of this subsection (6) (((g))) (h)(iv), "replacement server equipment" means server 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
- (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;
- 38 (B) Is installed and put into regular use ((before April 1, 39 2024)) no later than 12 years after the date of the certificate of

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1 occupancy or completion of refurbishment of the computer data center;
2 and

- (C) For tenants leasing space in an eligible computer data center built after July 1, 2015, is installed and put into regular use no later than twelve years after the date of the certificate of occupancy.
- ((\(\frac{(h)}{h}\)) (i) "Qualifying business" means a business entity that exists for the primary purpose of engaging in commercial activity for profit and that is the owner of an eligible computer data center. The term does not include the state or federal government or any of their departments, agencies, and institutions; tribal governments; political subdivisions of this state; or any municipal, quasimunicipal, public, or other corporation created by the state or federal government, tribal government, municipality, or political subdivision of the state.
- $((\frac{(i)}{(i)}))$ "Qualifying tenant" means a business entity that exists for the primary purpose of engaging in commercial activity for profit and that leases space from a qualifying business within an eligible computer data center. The term does not include the state or federal government or any of their departments, agencies, and institutions; tribal governments; political subdivisions of this state; or any municipal, quasi-municipal, public, or other corporation created by the state or federal government, tribal government, municipality, or political subdivision of the state. The term also does not include a lessee of space in an eligible computer data center under $((\frac{(e)}{(e)}))$ (f) (i) (C) (I) of this subsection (6), if the lessee and lessor are affiliated and:
- (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
- (ii) Prior to May 2, 2012, the primary use of the server equipment installed in that eligible computer data center was to provide electronic data storage and data management services for the business purposes of either the lessor, persons affiliated with the lessor, or both.
- 37 (((j))) (k)(i) "Refurbished" or "refurbishment" means a
 38 substantial improvement to an eligible computer data center for which
 39 a certificate of occupancy is not issued. Such an improvement must

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- 1 update or modernize servers, server space, ventilation, or power
 2 infrastructure in an eligible computer data center.
 - (ii) For a qualifying computer data center to be considered refurbished, the qualifying business must certify, in a form and manner prescribed by the department, that the refurbishment of an eligible computer data center is complete. The refurbishment is considered complete on the date that the improved portion of the computer data center is operationally complete and able to be used for its intended purpose.
 - (1) "Server equipment" means the computer hardware located in an eligible computer data center and used exclusively to provide electronic data storage and data management services for internal use by the owner or lessee of the computer data center, for clients of the owner or lessee of the computer data center, or both. "Server equipment" also includes computer software necessary to operate the computer hardware. "Server equipment" does not include personal computers, the racks upon which the server equipment is installed, and computer peripherals such as keyboards, monitors, printers, and mice.
- 20 <u>(7) This section expires July 1, 2047.</u>

- **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 for which an exemption certificate under RCW 82.08.986 has been issued, and to the use of labor and services rendered in respect to installing such server equipment.
 - ((The)) (b) Until January 1, 2026, this exemption also applies to the use by a qualifying business or qualifying tenant of eligible power infrastructure, including labor and services rendered in respect to installing, repairing, altering, or improving such infrastructure at an eligible computer data center for which an exemption certificate under RCW 82.08.986 has been issued.
 - (c) The exemptions provided in this section expire July 1, 2047.
- 37 (2) A qualifying business or a qualifying tenant is not eligible 38 for the exemption under this section unless the department issued an

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

- (3)(((a) The exemption provided in this section does not apply to:
- (i) Any person who has received the benefit of the deferral program under chapter 82.60 RCW on: (A) The construction, renovation, or expansion of a structure or structures used as a computer data center; or (B) machinery or equipment used in a computer data center; and
- (ii) Any person affiliated with a person within the scope of (a) (i) of this subsection (3).
- (b) If a person has received the benefit of the exemption under this section and subsequently receives the benefit of the deferral program under chapter 82.60 RCW on either the construction, renovation, or expansion of a structure or structures used as a computer data center or machinery or equipment used in a computer data center, the person must repay the amount of taxes exempted under this section. Interest as provided in chapter 82.32 RCW applies to 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 property and services for which the person is required to repay taxes under RCW 82.08.986(5).
- (4+)) The definitions and requirements in RCW 82.08.986 apply to this section.
 - (4) This section expires July 1, 2047.

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