

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2498

As Reported by House Committee On:
Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade

Title: An act relating to cluster-based economic development.

Brief Description: Establishing an industry cluster-based approach to economic development.

Sponsors: Representatives Kilmer, Buri, Morrell, Skinner, Green, Linville, McCoy, Moeller, Chase, Rodne, Conway, Haler, Morris, Ericks and Sells.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade: 1/17/06, 1/18/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to identify industry clusters, working with various entities and to develop strategies to foster the development of the state and regional industry clusters.
- Creates a competitive grant program to assist communities to develop, in partnerships, regional economic development and industry cluster strategies, and to conduct related cluster market strategies.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE & TRADE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by Representatives Linville, Chair; Pettigrew, Vice Chair; Kristiansen, Ranking Minority Member; Skinner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Blake, Buri, Chase, Clibborn, Dunn, Grant, Haler, Holmquist, Kilmer, Kretz, McCoy, Morrell, Quall, Strow, P. Sullivan and Wallace.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by Representatives Bailey and Newhouse.

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

Background:

A cluster is a geographic grouping of interdependent, competitive companies, their suppliers and supporting institutions. They represent regional specialization and comparative advantage. There is a growing interest in looking at particular industry clusters in Washington to better focus the public support of economic development. This includes looking at the

natural clusters to be more responsive in creating an educated and skilled workforce to support the clusters and providing public infrastructure.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) must work with industry associations and organization to identify regional and statewide industry clusters. This includes conducting focus groups, supporting industry cluster associations, and providing methods of economic communication and information among the firms within the industry cluster. The industry clusters may include aerospace, agriculture, food processing, forest products, business services, financial services, health and biomedical, software, digital and interactive media, transportation and distribution, and microelectronics.

The DCTED must also work with industry clusters, private organizations, local governments, local economic development organizations, and higher education and training institutions to develop strategies to strengthen Washington's industry clusters.

A competitive grant program is created to assist communities to develop, in partnerships, regional economic development and industry cluster strategies and to conduct related cluster market strategies. The grant program will be administered by the DCTED.

Grant applicants must include organizations from at least two counties, and may include local government, economic development councils, federally recognized Indian tribes, workforce development councils, and educational institutions. Applicants should also include participants from the local business community. Financial participation of the partner organizations is required.

A grant award may be up to \$100,000 per applicant, except for King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties, who may not receive more than \$100,000 combined. The grant may be used to fund organizational activities necessary to develop the partnership's regional economic development and industry cluster strategies. It may also be used for related marketing strategies. Only 10 percent of the money appropriated for the competitive grant program can be used by the DCTED for administrative costs.

The grant program expires June 30, 2007.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Digital and interactive media is identified as an industry cluster. The DCTED is directed to provide on-going support to industry cluster associations and efforts. King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties, all members of the Prosperity Partnership, are limited to a combined maximum of \$100,000 of grant proceeds. "Workforce training boards" are changed to "workforce development councils."

Appropriation: The sum of \$600,000.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The main impetus for this bill was the Prosperity Partnership efforts in the Puget Sound area. The collaboration of governments, government entities and the private sector in developing an economic development plan for the region based on an industry cluster plan is a model that other regions of the state could benefit from. The grant program will provide a targeted investment to encourage economic development planning at the local and regional levels, where budgets are smaller. The best economic development policies do not come from Olympia, but from the grassroots. The industry cluster approach melds well with the DCTED's current approach of targeted industries, matrix teams and action plans. This is a one-time chance to help communities strengthen their local economies.

(With concerns) The DCTED is concerned about the cost of providing technical support to organizations as it is not funded in the Governor's budget.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Kilmer, prime sponsor; Representative Buri; Tim Strege, William Factory Small Business Incubator; Susan Suess, Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County; and T.K. Bentler, Washington Food Processors Council.

(With concerns) Marie Sullivan, Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.