H-2528.1

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**HOUSE BILL 2298**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Reeves and Doglio

AN ACT Relating to establishing a climate resilience and environmental equity campus; amending RCW 43.52.391; adding a new section to chapter 43.30 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.10 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes that foresight and opportunity have defined the acquisition and realization of many of Washington's most significant cultural and educational assets. Without a vision for the future, and the willingness and means to pursue that vision, our state would not enjoy the benefits of world-class public universities, breathtaking state parks and lands, publicly owned forests and shorelines, a beautiful capital campus, and numerous other resources.

(2) The legislature recognizes also that opportunities to meaningfully expand the state's cultural and educational portfolio are neither frequent nor easily accomplished, but that the dividends from the investments exceed the necessary efforts.

(3) One such opportunity exists in 2024: The purchase and revisioning of the Weyerhaeuser company's former corporate headquarters. The suburban location, with its unique architectural value and convenient access to the central Puget Sound region, presents a scope of possibility that has seldom occurred in Washington's history.

(4) The timing of this possibility, while never without challenges, is appropriate and befitting for a truly urgent need: The unprecedented environmental and social issues facing our society and planet demand commensurate and well-reasoned responses by policymakers. The time for an accessible and innovative climate resilience education center and environmental equity hub that is driven and shaped by diverse public and private partnerships, has arrived.

(5) While the full and best use of the Weyerhaeuser company's former corporate headquarters will depend upon the creativity and innovation of future residents and leaders, the legislature intends to secure a broad slate of possibilities for the location by purchasing the site and initiating an inclusionary process for maximizing its cultural and educational value for all Washingtonians.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.30 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to funds appropriated for this specific purpose, the department shall acquire land in southern King county, at the junction of a state highway and an interstate highway, that is suitable for the purpose of creating and operating the climate resilience and environmental equity campus established in section 3 of this act.

(2) The department is granted all authority necessary to operate the climate resilience and environmental equity campus for the purpose of complying with the objectives of the campus as established in section 3 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.10 RCW to read as follows:

(1) A climate resilience and environmental equity campus must be established by the department of natural resources and Highline Community College to do the following:

(a) Provide workforce training for postsecondary students pursuing careers in climate-focused science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through on-site training and internships in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, social justice, community engagement, and civic skills;

(b) Develop a climate-focused program and curriculum for postsecondary students that includes training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as well as social justice, collaborative decision making, ethical climate engagement, and community and civic engagement that results in a certificate upon completion; and

(c) Provide informational exhibits exploring the various aspects of careers in climate-focused science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

(2) The climate resilience and environmental equity campus shall be operated and administered jointly as an education, training, and research center providing science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and climate-focused career training and education under the authority of Highline Community College and the department of natural resources as a joint operating agency pursuant to RCW 43.52.391. The climate resilience and environmental equity campus may be made available to all four-year institutions as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 and all community and technical colleges as defined in RCW 28B.50.020. Resources for career training may include internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and research opportunities for postsecondary students and faculty.

(3) The powers of the joint operating agency are vested in and shall be exercised by a board of directors consisting of nine voting members and a nonvoting chair appointed by the governor. Terms of the initial members must be staggered. The nine voting members shall consist of the following:

(a) One member representing Highline Community College;

(b) One member representing the department of natural resources;

(c) One member representing the public four-year institutions of higher education;

(d) One member representing the private institutions of higher education;

(e) One member representing the state board for community and technical colleges;

(f) One member representing the student achievement council;

(g) One member representing local Indian tribes;

(h) One member who is an environmental scientist with knowledge in climate resilience; and

(i) One member with experience in environmental justice and community and civic engagement.

(4) The board of directors shall:

(a) Work with science, technology, mathematics, engineering, and climate-focused industry members to develop internships, on-the-job training, research, and other opportunities to provide postsecondary students enrolled in programs with climate-focused science, technology, engineering, and mathematics with direct experience in the industry to provide career and skills training applicable to the industry, including social justice, community engagement, and civic skills;

(b) Develop and strengthen college and university-industry relationships through promotion of faculty collaboration with the industry;

(c) Encourage a full range of projects from small research projects to large scale, multipartner projects;

(d) Work with industry partners to effectively market career opportunities in climate-focused science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in Washington state, to diversify the workforce, and educate the public on the pathways to success in these career fields; and

(e) Work with colleges, universities, and industry partners to develop an industry-recognized certificate to be offered to postsecondary students who complete training at the climate resilience and environmental equity campus established in subsection (1) of this section.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.52.391 and 1982 c 1 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a joint operating agency shall have all powers now or hereafter granted public utility districts under the laws of this state. It shall not acquire nor operate any electric distribution properties nor condemn any properties owned by a public utility which are operated for the generation and transmission of electric power and energy or are being developed for such purposes with due diligence under a valid license or permit, nor purchase or acquire any operating hydroelectric generating plant owned by any city or district on June 11, 1953, or which may be acquired by any city or district by condemnation on or after January 1, 1957, nor levy taxes, issue general obligation bonds, or create subdistricts. It may enter into any contracts, leases or other undertakings deemed necessary or proper and acquire by purchase or condemnation any real or personal property used or useful for its corporate purposes. Actions in eminent domain may be instituted in the superior court of any county in which any of the property sought to be condemned is located and the court in any such action shall have jurisdiction to condemn property wherever located within the state; otherwise such actions shall be governed by the same procedure as now or hereafter provided by law for public utility districts. An operating agency may sell steam or water not required by it for the generation of power and may construct or acquire any facilities it deems necessary for that purpose.

(2) An operating agency may make contracts for any term relating to the purchase, sale, interchange or wheeling of power with the government of the United States or any agency thereof and with any municipal corporation or public utility, within or without the state, and may purchase or deliver power anywhere pursuant to any such contract. An operating agency may acquire any coal-bearing lands for the purpose of assuring a long-term, adequate supply of coal to supply its needs, both actual and prospective, for the generation of power and may make such contracts with respect to the extraction, sale or disposal of coal that it deems proper.

(3) Any member of an operating agency may advance or contribute funds to an agency as may be agreed upon by the agency and the member, and the agency shall repay such advances or contributions from proceeds of revenue bonds, from operating revenues or from any other funds of the agency, together with interest not to exceed the maximum specified in RCW 43.52.395(1). The legislative body of any member may authorize and make such advances or contributions to an operating agency to assist in a plan for termination of a project or projects, whether or not such member is a participant in such project or projects. Any member who makes such advances or contributions for terminating a project or projects in which it is not a participant shall not assume any liability for any debts or obligations related to the terminated project or projects on account of such advance or contribution.

(4) An operating agency may own and operate educational training facilities and centers designed to provide career education and on-the-job experiences.

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