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**HOUSE BILL 1623**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2023 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Volz, Chapman, Walsh, Maycumber, Paul, Graham, Ryu, Chambers, Ybarra, Barnard, Christian, Walen, Tharinger, and Shavers

Read first time 01/26/23. Referred to Committee on Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans.

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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