

HB 197 -- CALL CENTERS

SPONSOR: Ellebracht

This bill requires a business to notify the Department of Economic Development if it intends to terminate customer service positions in this state that handle 50% or more of its customer service call volume and relocate those positions to call centers as defined in the bill outside the United States. The notification must be made within 120 days of the termination and relocation. A violation of this requirement will result in a civil penalty for the business not to exceed \$10,000, each day of noncompliance is a separate violation, and the Attorney General can file suit to recover the civil penalty.

The Department will maintain a list of businesses that terminate and relocate their customer service positions, and the list will be available to the public and semiannually distributed to the Governor and General Assembly. A business cannot be removed from the outsourcing list until the fifth anniversary after it was added to the list unless it relocates back into the state as many customer service positions as it previously terminated and relocated.

Public agencies must give preference to bidders that are not on the outsourcing list when awarding contracts for services.

A public agency is prohibited from awarding or providing a public subsidy to any business on the outsourcing list unless the business can show that the refusal to grant the subsidy would result in job loss in the state or harm the environment.

A business that receives a public subsidy and then later is put on the outsourcing list must repay the entire amount of the public subsidy.

On the request of a customer, a business is required to ensure that customer service employees disclose certain identifying information about the employee and the call center; enable the customer to speak to an employee of the business; transfer the call to a person in this state if the customer service employee is not in this state. This section of the bill has an effective date of January 1, 2023.

All call center services performed on behalf of a state agency must be performed in this state.

This bill is similar to HB 2081 (2020).