

Dear Councilmembers and Mr. County Executive,

We urge you to pause all data center permitting and deployment until the County has created a responsible regulatory framework for them.

The proposed ZTA 26-01 is a useful start in the process; however it is missing a number of key items and relies on vague, poorly defined language that allows significant wriggle room for noncompliance with the spirit of the ZTA. Further, it does not deal with the central question of primary power source for data centers.

I urge you to adopt the amendments to the ZTA submitted by the Montgomery County Coalition to Protect Neighborhoods, which include:

1. Categorize data centers as an industrial use in the zoning code (section 3.6), only allowed in heavy industrial (IH) zones, under conditional use permits, subject to a 5-year renewal cycle
2. Require public hearings for all conditional use approvals
3. Require data center operators to build their own generation or use dedicated transmission lines that are buried underground and not co-mingled with the electrical grid used by residential ratepayers
4. Establish a minimum setback of 3 miles from residential zones
5. Ensure that data centers and related electrical infrastructure do not increase the levels of electromagnetic radiation on other properties
6. Ensure that noise standards include sub audible frequencies (zero to 20 kHz)
Require ongoing compliance monitoring by independent auditors

In addition, if you adopt Bill 4-26 alone or in addition to the ZTA, please amend to include:
environmental analysis should include impacts on electromagnetic fields
one of the two representatives from a civic association and an environmental group should be appointed by the County executive

See here for detailed legislative amendments on the ZTA and the bill
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2026/20260224/testimony/item5-MontgomeryCountyCoalitiontoProtectNeighborhoods.pdf>

I understand the Council's desire for Montgomery County to participate in the AI-driven data center boom. At the same time, it should not be at the expense of the residents who live here – after all, we all want economic development that is a net benefit to residents.

Sincerely,
Highly Concerned Montgomery County Resident

PS - Please add this testimony to the official hearing record.