



# Institute for Policy Studies

Good afternoon, and thanks for the opportunity to testify on Bill 4-26, Task Force on Data Centers. My name is Basav Sen, and I am the Climate Policy Director at the Institute for Policy Studies. We are members of the Climate Justice Alliance, a nationwide alliance of nearly 100 organizations on the frontlines of the climate and toxic pollution crises. I am a resident of Silver Spring.

The data center boom is causing serious detrimental impacts nationwide.

First, the massive energy consumption of data centers is leading to skyrocketing utility bills. The Union of Concerned Scientists found that residential customers in Maryland alone paid an [additional \\$107.5 million](#) to subsidize data center electricity demand in 2024. This is unacceptable. Residential customers, many of whom are struggling to pay their bills, should not be forced to subsidize the bills of tech corporations.

Second, the data center boom threatens to reverse progress on cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The global scientific consensus is unequivocal: it is imperative to cut greenhouse gas emissions rapidly for a livable future for humanity. But data centers in the U.S. obtain much of their electricity from gas-burning power plants. Greenhouse gas emissions from data centers could [triple by 2035](#).

Third, the increase in fossil fueled power generation because of electricity demand from data centers causes increased levels of toxic air pollutants such as particulate matter and nitrogen oxides. Some of this pollution is emitted from backup diesel generators on-site at the data centers. In [Northern Virginia](#), emissions for some pollutants from diesel generators at data centers exceeds the corresponding emissions from power plants. Given the [long-standing pattern](#) of locating polluting infrastructure in Black, Brown, and economically disadvantaged communities, data center pollution can be a serious environmental justice issue.

For all of these reasons, Montgomery County should not rush into permitting data center construction. A task force to study the costs and benefits of data centers is a sensible proposal. I strongly recommend that the bill be amended to require robust community consultation to ensure that the concerns of potentially impacted community members are incorporated in the final report. Further, I recommend that the mandate for the task force be clarified to include the possibility of a final report that finds data centers to be altogether against the public interest, and unacceptable infrastructure for the County.

Thank you.