Testimony on ZTA 26-01 Data Center Commercial Uses - Data Center

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Data centers are entirely new, complex and increasingly controversial. This is a land use that we have no zoning code for. This proposed ZTA is silent on the most impactful issues with data centers - namely the impact on our regional water and power supply. The scale of these projects is unlike anything else in the county and the zoning neds to acknowledge that. I've read the data centers will use the same energy as hundreds of thousands of houses and millions of gallons of the Potomac we can't afford to lose.

You have heard the outcry over the sewage spill into the Potomac and the repeated statements that it is not affecting the regions drinking water - this will NOT be the case with a data center. Warm water impacts biodiversity and allows algal growth - each summer there are peiods when the river is not safe due to toxic algae. This will only be exacerbated by the use of the Potomac as a water source for cooling.

Regulations that take stakeholders into account and balance data centers with climate goals and resource protection will take some time to get right. Please put a moratorium into place quickly to allow the time to craft zoning that takes the real issues into account. We need to pause like several other Maryland jurisdictions have done.

Even if there is a pause, there needs to be explicit regulations that data centers must pay 100% for energy use and infrastructure buildout required. Taxpayers in Montgomery County are tired of ever increasing expenses with diminished returns. One reason we moved here from Virginia was the commitment to green space and environmental stewardship. Adoption of data centers, without a plan to control them and their impact, is not only an environmental disaster waiting to happen, but a recipe to lose residents and your tax base.

Please include my comments in the hearing record.

Thank You,

Amy Hsu