

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

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To the Montgomery County Council and Planning Board:

As a resident of Darnestown, I am writing to strongly urge the Council to enact an immediate, comprehensive moratorium on all new data center approvals. We must pause this development while robust, science-backed policies are created to protect our residents, natural resources, and particularly the Potomac River.

I am concerned that the current proposed regulations (ZTA 26-01) do not go far enough to address the massive, around-the-clock consumption of power and water that "hyperscale" data centers require.

Specifically, I urge you to:

**Pause and Study:** Implement a moratorium to allow the proposed Task Force (Bill 4-26) to complete its work, rather than rushing through zoning changes.

**Protect our Water:** With data centers potentially drawing millions of gallons of water daily, we cannot risk the stability of the Potomac River, which supplies 75% of our region's drinking water.

**Protect our Grid:** Data centers threaten to drive up electricity rates for residents and could exacerbate the need for more fossil-fuel-driven power plants.

**Ensure Zoning Integrity:** Ensure any future development is strictly limited to appropriate industrial areas, with mandatory, substantial setbacks from residential communities, schools, and environmental assets.

Other Maryland jurisdictions—including Prince George's, Frederick, Carroll, and Baltimore Counties have already taken similar, prudent steps to manage this industry. It is time for

Montgomery County to do the same and prioritize it's citizens over massive giveaways to big tech.

We must learn from the mistakes of our neighbors. Recent reports show that Pennsylvania has effectively bungled its approach by allowing massive "giveaways" to big tech, leaving everyday residents to pick up the tab. In 2024 alone, Pennsylvania ratepayers were forced to pay \$492 million in increased utility bills to subsidize the transmission infrastructure required for data center buildouts. This staggering figure stands in stark contrast to the Governor's public claims of saving consumers money on their monthly energy bills. We cannot allow Montgomery County to replicate this model, where the financial burden of Big Tech's expansion is shifted onto the backs of local families. We MUST prioritize the livelihoods of local families over corporate profits.

Lastly, Dickerson sits entirely within the Agricultural "RESERVE"; this is an area characterized by rural landscapes, working farms, and historic sites. Of all the things that don't belong, datacenters don't belong the most.

Sincerely,

Dan Potter