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Elders Climate Action Maryland

ZTA 26-01, Commercial Uses - Data Center
Hearing Date: February 24, 2026

Elders Climate Action is a nationwide organization devoted to ensuring that our children, grandchildren, and future generations have a world in which they can thrive. The Maryland Chapter has members across the state, including many in Montgomery County.

Each day, we see the climate crisis more clearly. We know Montgomery County is at risk for flooding from intense rainfall, heat waves, and other extreme weather events. The clean energy transition is an essential part of caring for our communities now and protecting our future and the future of our grandchildren.

We are deeply concerned about the rapid build-out of hyperscale data centers. Their extreme energy demands have the potential to significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions, undermine grid stability, raise electricity prices, and undermine efforts to electrify homes and businesses. There are also other major environmental impacts, such as water use, which must be addressed.

We are not opposed to data centers. We use them every day for email, online shopping, Zoom calls, and more, and we know that there are uses of artificial intelligence that can bring real benefits to our families and communities. But we must have thoughtful, well-designed guardrails and incentives to guide this development and prevent negative impacts.

Montgomery County is at a point where action is needed now to design and implement those guardrails and incentives. We have appreciated the work of County Council members in that regard.

We have reviewed the information available from Terra Energy and Atmosphere LLC, the draft ZTA 26-01, and other information from Council members and

members of the public. We are also advocating for legislation regulating data centers at the state level.

We believe there are important elements that need to be added to the draft ZTA to prevent data centers from undermining our efforts to control greenhouse gases, raising utility costs for county residents and small businesses, or damaging water quality. The ZTA and any other regulations that are developed need to apply to the hyperscale data centers that are currently proposed and any that may be added later.

This is clearly a complex undertaking, and it will be influenced by the work currently underway in the Maryland General Assembly. Because of that, we recommend a moratorium on the approval and construction of new data centers to give the County time consider any new state legislation that may pass this session, consult with a diverse group of stakeholders and experts, and craft the policies we need.

Thank you.