

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

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I write to ask you to support a moratorium on data centers while our county figures out how to beat regulate this fledgling industry. Our natural environment and the health and wellness of our community members are under attack at the national level, with important climate change and other environmental risks being ignored, and the fight for a healthy environment being abandoned for profit. That is what our national government is doing to us. Please don't follow suit here in MoCo. MoCo prides itself on being progressive, sensitive to residents' needs, and protective of the environment. This zoning process is being rushed through too quickly. We do not have enough information to craft appropriate regulations. And a rush to the finish on this data center plan is placing profits above people. Enough! Do not allow your voters and neighbors to be the victims of data center damage -- the 2026 version of the polluting, health-harming strip mines of decades ago. A rush through this process will be as shameful as the pollution that was dumped in rivers as strip mining took off last century. Just like then, we're at risk of ignoring the long-term consequences of short-term thinking. We can and must do better! We need a data center moratorium now, so we can get this right, put people before profits, and protect citizens from the many harms these data centers create when rushed through.

Data centers are entirely new, complex and increasingly controversial. This is a land use that we have no zoning code for. This proposed ZTA 26-01 is silent on the most impactful issues with data centers - namely the impact on our regional water, power supply and health. Residents are already paying unbearable prices for energy. Data centers in other areas have resulted in ordinary citizens footing the bill for the outrageous and rapacious energy consumption of data centers. Equally awful, MD is in a drought currently, and all signs point to worsening drought frequency due to a warming climate. As the years pass, water resources will likely be placed under increasing strain, even in the absence of data centers. Water consumption by data centers will exponentially worsen things; their need for water is unsustainable.

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.

Please include my comments in the hearing record.

Thank You,

Gail Orendorff Weiner