

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

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Laura Welch
Takoma Park, Maryland

The affordability crisis is directly tied to data center capacity, our electric bills are already too high and the People's Counsel has said the proliferation of data centers is to blame. What is the rush to jump in and allow large scale data centers here? There is every reason to wait, particularly with a project with unknown impacts speeding toward approval with no regulations.

In the State legislature several bills are under consideration that address data centers. It is important to make sure any data centers in MoCo are covered by those new rules, and we need a pause on data center development until we see what the new regulations will be. One bill addresses the large loads on the electricity grid that will ensure. PJM (Maryland's regional power grid operator) expects 32 GW of load growth in the next four years, 94% of which is explained by data centers alone. Our power grid is not prepared to handle this rapid, unchecked growth, and on hot days when energy usage reaches its peak, it may be overwhelmed, leading to blackouts for ratepayers across the state.

The Data Center Clean Capacity Bill will address this problem by:

• Establishing a voluntary demand response program: Data centers operators will be able to opt in to a program where they reduce the amount of power they pull from the grid at peak hours through battery storage, shifting workload to other facilities, and carbon-free energy generation.

• Requiring that new data centers get at least 25% of their energy from carbon-free sources or demand response. The demand response program is voluntary, as noted above. But this provision requires data centers to source carbon free electricity if they opt out of demand response.

• Prioritizing data centers that bring their own clean energy: Data centers that provide 100%

of their own energy through carbon-free energy sources, battery storage, and demand response will be fast-tracked for interconnection and permitting.

â€¢ Requiring data centers to pay into a community benefit fund: Data centers must pay \$1,000 per MW into the EmPOWER program, which assists low-income Marylanders.

So lets slow down and get this right. Some of the lack of transparency from the industry is by design - and there is another state bill that addresses that. We rely on our leaders to not accept NDAs and "proprietary information" and get the facts before allowing a new land use here. Please include my comments in the hearing record.

Thank You,

Laura Welch