

Testimony Against ZTA 26-01 Commercial Uses Data Center

Dear PHP Committee and General County Council

Greetings

My name is Robert Alex Stubblefield and I am a poet, lay minister-theologian, and activist-organizer with a variety of groups such as The Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition, Black United Front of Moco, DSA, Moco Liberation Collective, Young People for Progress among others. Just as important, I am a resident of Montgomery County and I am writing this testimony against ZTA 26-01 Commercial Uses Data Center. My reasons are explained below.

Let me preface by saying I recognize my hypocrisy in the sense that every time I use my phone, I am using a data center and I also acknowledge that there are data centers already operating in Montgomery County. That being said however, what makes this different is considering that there have been a rapid spate of data center development especially with the considering of a data center complex at the old Dickerson site. The issue is this zoning amendment is a waste of resources. We have more than enough ample evidence that Data centers cause much damage to the environment. For example, in other states like Texas, Tennessee, California among others, data centers are generating poisonous fumes that have been linked to increases in cancers, and respiratory illnesses such as asthma, emphysema among others. This is problematic because this is part of environmental justice movement where harmful environments are destroying the health of communities. Additionally, Data centers use up a ton of freshwater to the point where communities in the aforementioned states are now having to ration water. This is problematic because per the UN, data centers are accelerating the world to go into freshwater bankruptcy to the point that we are currently only going to have enough freshwater to last us 13 years. 13 years is not that far off into the future. It would be hypocritical that for Moco to call itself a leader in environmental justice to allow a data center to cause quite frankly the death of community. Especially since the droughts we have in Moco specifically and in Maryland more generally we are facing water crisis of our own why would we add to it? This zoning amendment just exacerbates the problem.

The second reason is that they don't offer the economic benefits they promise. A claim oftentimes is that they provide jobs. They may provide a short term boon in terms of construction but after that, they don't. The jobs many of these data centers provide is around ten to maybe fifteen people at most. Considering that Moco has 1.1 million people living here, that's not a lot. On top of that, you even have had lobbyists admit that these data centers don't create the jobs and economic benefits promised and that they wouldn't want a data center in their area. If you

have lobbyists for these data centers admit that they don't have benefits, why would you then need a task force for that? Make it make sense? On top of this the AI Bubble is going to burst and you're going to be left with a complex that quite frankly isn't going to bring in the revenues you think they are and the tax breaks offered will leave us footing the bill. Then what will happen to the site?

Given that we recently had a community conversation where a majority are not in support of a data center and as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, we don't need a zoning amendment because we have more than enough evidence that data centers extract. We need housing, we need worker owned cooperatives, we need schools and libraries to be treated as palaces of learning. Which would be a better use of the site in question instead of wasting money and time on this. Actually invest in things that will actually grow and sustain Montgomery County.