



TESTIMONY OF AARON BAST, BUSINESS MANAGER AND FINANCIAL SECRETARY  
TREASURER, IRON WORKERS LOCAL 5

HB900 -

ELECTRICITY - DATA CENTERS - RATE SCHEDULE AND REQUIREMENTS

BEFORE THE HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE  
IN OPPOSITION TO HB400 / SB55

Dear Chair Wilson and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Aaron Bast, and I have the privilege of representing the hardworking men and women of Ironworkers Local 5. Our members are the backbone of Maryland's construction industry—raising the steel, reinforcing the concrete, and fabricating the infrastructure that powers our economy. We take pride in the fact that our work doesn't just build structures; it builds opportunity, security, and a future for skilled tradespeople and their families. Unfortunately, HB 900 threatens to derail much of that progress. It's a bill that doesn't just put unnecessary restrictions on data centers—it puts up roadblocks to economic growth, job creation, and the long-term energy investments that Maryland desperately needs.

**Data Centers Mean Jobs—Real, Skilled, Union Jobs**

When we talk about data centers, we're not just talking about tech companies storing information. We're talking about massive, steel-framed structures that require thousands of hours of highly skilled labor—jobs for ironworkers, electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, and countless others in the building trades. These aren't temporary gig jobs or outsourced work. These are union careers that support families, offer retirement security, and provide a clear pathway into the middle class.

States that have embraced data center investment—like Virginia and Pennsylvania—have seen firsthand how these facilities create ripple effects throughout the trades. The steel and concrete alone require extensive fabrication and installation, not to mention the highly specialized structural work needed to support the weight of cooling systems, backup power units, and server racks.

Maryland has the skilled workforce to build and maintain these facilities, but that work won't come here if policymakers make it more difficult to operate in the state. The construction of these projects is already challenging enough. We don't need more unnecessary regulations that send companies looking elsewhere.





### **A Threat to Energy Investment and the Grid**

Data centers don't just create jobs—they create demand for stable, reliable energy infrastructure. That's a good thing. It means investments in Maryland's power grid, long-term planning for energy expansion, and the kind of large-scale infrastructure projects that put ironworkers and other trades to work.

We've seen how this plays out in other states. In Pennsylvania, for example, Microsoft's agreement with Constellation helped restart nearly 1,000 megawatts of nuclear power production—clean, carbon-free energy that ensures long-term reliability while creating work opportunities for the skilled trades. Maryland could see similar benefits by embracing this industry instead of making it more difficult to operate here.

### **HB 900: A Step in the Wrong Direction**

This bill takes aim at data centers, but its impact goes far beyond tech companies. It disrupts energy investment, makes Maryland less competitive, and sends the wrong message to industries looking to grow here. If this legislation passes, we won't just lose out on data center jobs—we'll lose the downstream economic benefits that come with them. That means fewer large-scale construction projects, fewer opportunities for apprenticeship programs, and fewer union jobs in the years ahead.

At Ironworkers Local 5, we fight every day to ensure that our members have the opportunities they deserve. We advocate for policies that support working families, protect good-paying jobs, and promote responsible investment in our state's infrastructure. HB 900 fails on all of these fronts.

I urge this committee to reject this bill and stand with Maryland's workers, not against them. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Aaron Bast  
Business Manager & Financial Secretary Treasurer  
Ironworkers Local 5