

Committee: Economic Matters
Testimony on: HB-0579 – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity and Related Approvals – Definition of Generating Station (Critical Infrastructure Streamlining Act of 2024)
Submitting: Rhonda Kranz
Position: Oppose
Hearing Date: February 22, 2024

Thank you for accepting my written testimony in opposition of HB0579. I have been living in Maryland for nearly 30 years and am proud of the efforts the state has made to combat Climate Change and decrease air and water pollution. I am dismayed by Governor Moore’s Bill that proposes *“Altering and establishing the definition of "generating station" for the purpose of exempting the construction of certain generating facilities used to produce electricity for the purpose of onsite emergency backup and certain test and maintenance operations from the requirement to obtain a certificate of public convenience and necessity or certain other related approvals under certain circumstances.”*

In short, the bill would make it easier for large data centers to be sited in the state by bypassing the institution that was formed to provide oversight of such activities. That makes no sense. The Public Service Commission is where there is the opportunity to ask important questions regarding diesel generator facilities. Unlike regulatory certifications for air or water the Commission can ask about the impacts of the backup generation sources, and what the environmental justice implications are. A bill that bypasses the PSC for one political reason sets a very dangerous precedent in which this crucial commission will be left out or hamstrung whenever there is a political disagreement.

I understand the importance of bringing industry to Maryland. Data centers could be a good fit, potentially bringing in tax revenue and jobs. Governor Moore said that he “believes it imperative for the state to invest in decisions that will prepare us for the problems of the future, and this bill is an example of that,” In fact, this bill will do the opposite of preparing us for the future. Instead it will allow the state to jump in with little understanding of the big picture. We have only to look at Virginia to see how poor planning and little regulatory oversight can be disastrous. We should not fall in to the same polluted lake.

Data centers require massive amounts of energy to operate and also require backup power generation. These generators average 3 MW per generator, with each data center facility having upwards of 100 or more generators. The most serious issue for Maryland is the standard use diesel generators. The greenhouse gases, pollution, and health hazards that come with it must be carefully considered.

Maryland is working hard to significantly decrease the use of fossil fuels to meet its climate change goals. Diesel is one of the most dangerous forms of energy we can emit, and although natural gas, a proposed alternative would be somewhat less destructive, it is still fossil fuel. As we turn to bringing high energy use technologies to the state, we should be working toward producing renewable energy sources in the near future. These are issues that require strong oversight and what will move Maryland in to a healthy and strong climate friendly future.

For these and many other reasons I urge that you OPPOSE HB0579.