



SB861

Public Utilities - High-Energy-Use Facilities – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions

Testimony before Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee

Hearing March 7, 2024, 1:00 p.m.

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Sen. Feldman and Vice-Chair Sen. Kagan, my name is Elizabeth Fixsen, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County, an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of SB861, requiring facilities using high levels of energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions according to certain targets. We thank Senators Young and Watson for sponsoring this bill.

A high-energy-use facility is one that (1) uses a base load of 10 or more megawatt hours, and (2) primarily provides electronic data processing or hosting services or producing or processing cryptocurrencies or cultivating cannabis.

The bill establishes a baseline emissions level of 0.428 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per megawatt-hour of electricity used by a high-energy-use facility. Then it establishes a timeline of reduction of emissions: 60% by 2027; 80% by 2030; 90% by 2035; and 100% by 2040. It prohibits owners from achieving reductions by using carbon offsets or renewable energy credits.

According to C&C Technology Group, data centers consume about 1,000 kWh per square meter--about ten times the power consumption of a typical American home. According to S&P global, bitcoin mining companies use powerful computers housed in sprawling datacenters to verify, process and record cryptocurrency transactions. A single bitcoin transaction using the "proof-of-work" process today requires 705 kWh of electricity. According to Pullman & Comey, growing four pounds of marijuana at an indoor facility can consume as much electricity as the average American home uses in a year. Cannabis growth now accounts for 1% of all U.S. electricity consumption per year, and this consumption is expected to increase to 3% by 2035.

The state of Maryland is not immune from the effects of climate change; for example, we have seen increases in flooding along the Chesapeake Bay. It is imperative that every possible measure is taken to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in order to combat climate change and protect the whole planet.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Elizabeth Fixsen
Savage, MD