SB0116 - SUPPORT

Sonia Demiray
Climate Communications Coalition
sonia@demirayink.com
202-744-2948

SB-0116- Data Center Impact Analysis and Report

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
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Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

My name is Sonia Demiray, I am the Executive Director of the Climate Communications Coalition, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition, and of the MLC Climate Justice Wing. The Climate Communications Coalition strongly supports SB0116.

As we have learned from our neighbors in Virginia, hyper-scale datacenters, the likes of which are being considered in Maryland, require such large amounts of power, water, and land that they monumentally transform any locality in which they are built. In Frederick County, where I live, a 2,100 acre site is transforming bucolic Adamstown through an imposing gigawatt-scale Quantum Loophole datacenter campus.

We need to fully understand any potential impact from datacenters before we hurtle towards irreversible land-conversion, exploitation of natural resources, and a reversal from our clean energy transition to dirty energy generation sources (i.e. gas, biogas, biomass, nuclear) all in the name of a technology which very soon may not require these installations. For example the recent DeepSeek technology development is putting the need for massive servers for AI into question.

In Frederick County, concerns have already been raised over the drilling of a 41-mile fiber optic tunnel which has resulted in the repeated release of harmful drilling mud into creeks leading to the nearby Monocacy River. Large concerns are being raised over diesel-back up power generators which spew toxic nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO2), and carbon dioxide (CO2) into local communities and add to greenhouse gases warming our climate. We know that Maryland cannot produce the amount of power required by these data centers, hence backup power will be key. In addition to the air pollution, what about the light and noise pollution?

We must refrain on rushing into these large projects without fully understanding the need and the impact. Can datacenters bring their own clean power (solar, wind, or geothermal)? What sort of power-storage systems are being considered? Where will the water be drawn from? Please take the time to conduct an analysis of the actual need, the environmental, energy, and economic impacts of datacenter development. We urge a favorable report on SB0116. ###