



MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

January 11, 2025

Bill: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/sb/sb0116F.pdf>

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB0116—Data Center Impact Analysis and Report

Position: Support SB0116

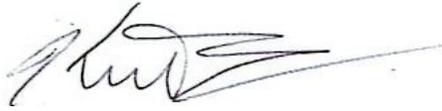
The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) strongly supports SB0116 and urges the Committees to issue a favorable report. This bill will require the Maryland Department of Environment, the Maryland Energy Administration, and the University of Maryland School of Business to conduct an analysis of the impacts of data center development on the environment, energy usage, and the economy.

We support this bill because data centers have an outsized impact on wildlife habitat, energy consumption, air and water quality. We have watched data centers in northern Virginia gobble up open space, and place heavy loads on the energy grid. Indeed, a power line project to power northern Virginia data centers, the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) will cut through the Monocacy Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA) in Frederick and Carroll Counties, and come close to the Pretty Boy Reservoir in Baltimore County. It will cross 483 acres of Tier II Watersheds, 47 acres of wetlands, and 125 acres of riparian buffers. 377 acres of forest will be removed. As can be seen, it is not just data centers, but also the power lines that supply them, that negatively impact wildlife habitat, water and air quality.

Wide open spaces, home to many grassland bird species, are prime targets for data centers. Our grassland birds are in steep decline.

Before Maryland starts to build such centers, we should be fully cognizant of the impacts such centers will have on wildlife habitat, energy usage, and air and water. Therefore, MOS supports this bill, and urges a favorable Committee report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kurt R. Schwarz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kurt R. Schwarz
Conservation Chair Emeritus
Maryland Ornithological Society
www.mdbirds.org