

Senate Bill 168 – SUPPORT

**Senate Bill 116 – Data Center Impact Analysis and Report
Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and Environment**

My name is John Garofolo. I am a recently retired senior federal test and measurement scientist, a computer scientist, an Anne Arundel Watershed Steward Academy (WSA) - Master Watershed Steward, a citizen environmentalist, and I have previously been on the board of directors of my community association. I have lived in the community of Stoney Beach for 20 years – a 62-acre peninsula community in Curtis Bay in Northern Anne Arundel County.

I am very concerned about the unchecked proliferation of data centers on several fronts. These include pollution that they will directly and indirectly create – e.g. forcing antiquated coal and fossil fuel power generation plants to remain open, their use of enormous amounts electricity and fresh water for cooling, and their massive impact on our already fragile power grid and our electricity prices. We're already seeing these impacts from what has happened in Virginia. We don't want to create even graver problems in Maryland with ungrounded decisions based on the promise of profits to companies which will profit on the backs of Maryland taxpayers and electricity rate payers and pollution overburdened communities. We need to bring wisdom and a strong analysis framework to bear to regulation of data center development that considers risk as well as costs and benefits. I believe that strong measurement frameworks are critical to decision making. And with this issue, they need to incorporate many factors - spanning economics, energy, and environment. The regulation of data centers should not be a political football. The data needs to tell us empirically that the decisions we make will support both the taxpayers and the environment.

One example of an uncaptured risk in the discussion about data centers hits my community directly. I live within 1000 feet of the coal-powered Brandon Shores power generation station and even closer to the Wagner power-generation station which was recently converted from coal to other fossil fuels. Our community literally chokes on the fumes of these polluters. And we've now been told that they must be kept open until 2029 because the PJM grid operator and BG&E and the state made poor decisions about electricity reliability as they transitioned away from fossil fuel power plants. I have been in discussions with Talen Energy since 2019 on behalf of my community. They planned then to shutter these power plants by 2025. Unfortunately, given the ravenous demand of data centers for electricity – both in VA and now MD, I don't see that these extreme polluters will ever be shuttered – or they'll be replaced with natural gas boilers which are almost just as unhealthy for nearby residential communities. There are thousands of homes within 5 miles of these power plants. And now the future of our health rests on decisions that the state makes about electricity usage and regulation and data centers which will significantly increase electricity demand. **Our communities will pay for data centers in our taxes, our electricity bills, and our health. Yet, we foresee little benefit on the ground for the taxpaying citizens of our state from these corporate follies. The tradeoffs and risks must be fully measured.**

We have anecdotal evidence of higher respiratory, cardiac, cancer, and neurological disease in our community – likely due to the power plants next to us. But, the state refuses to implement proper air quality monitoring in our area or conduct a health study for fear that it might uncover an inconvenient truth. Moreover, our health is threatened by many polluters within just 5 miles of our community including the enormous expanding MPA Cox Creek Dredge Material Containment facility, a petroleum/asphalt processing plant, a chemical plant, multiple toxic material dumps, the horribly polluting Curtis Bay Energy medical incinerator - which is the largest in the country, the CSX coal terminal, and even a radioactive Superfund site. And, we are only two and a half miles directly across the Patapsco from Sparrows Point in which cleanup operations from the pollution from Bethlehem Steel have been ongoing for years. And there are countless other highly contaminated legacy pollution sites within our Zip Code. We have suffered environmental injustice for decades and data centers in the state will only make that worse.

It is critically important for the future of our state, our economy, energy affordability, our environment, and our health that the quantitative analyses described in SB 116 are incorporated into planning and regulation of data centers in our state and that we not make knee jerk decisions to move forward with data center proliferation which would create massive economic and environmental burdens for the state and especially its citizens. Moreover, these analyses need to include quantitative measures of risks and uncertainties and impacts to overburdened communities, and they will need to be updated continuously.

I strongly support Senate Bill 116 and its commitment to perform a rigorous multi-variate analysis of data centers for Maryland and that these analyses are used quantitatively in the regulation of data center development and that these decisions are made scientifically rather than politically. This bill is a landmark for future bills that regulate and evaluate the deployment of data centers based on solid cross-cutting quantitative analyses. The state cannot afford not do this analysis.

Sincerely,

John S. Garofolo

Stoney Beach, Curtis Bay, MD