WRITTEN TESTIMONY
BILL NO.: Senate Bill 116 – Data Center Impact Analysis and Report
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
HEARING DATE: February 13, 2025
SPONSOR: Senator Lewis Young
POSITION: Favorable

On behalf of **Stop MPRP, Inc.**, I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support** of **Senate Bill 116**, which mandates a thorough analysis of the environmental, energy, and economic impacts of data center development in Maryland. This legislation is **essential to ensuring responsible infrastructure planning** that protects Maryland's natural resources, agricultural lands, and rural communities while addressing the state's significant energy supply challenges.

Data Centers and the Growing Energy Crisis in Maryland
Maryland already **imports approximately 40% of its electricity**, making it one of the most energy-deficient states in the nation. The rapid expansion of energy-intensive **data centers** will significantly **increase demand for imported power**, further straining the grid and **forcing more transmission infrastructure**—much of which will come at the **expense of Maryland's farmland, forests, and communities**.

The **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)** is a prime example of how **data center-driven energy demand** directly leads to the expansion of **high-voltage transmission lines**. The proposed project would:

- Clear 394 acres of forested land,
- Destroy 522 acres of cultivated farmland,
- Encroach on 245 acres of conservation land,
- Cross 101 streams and waterbodies,
- And permanently take 224 acres of farmland protected under Maryland's Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program.

This is the price Maryland is paying to accommodate **large-scale, high-consumption data centers** that provide limited long-term benefits to residents. **Maryland cannot afford to sacrifice its land, water, and agricultural economy simply to accommodate data centers that will drive even more energy imports from Pennsylvania and beyond.**

Data Center Expansion and Clean Energy Goals Are Incongruent

Maryland's **clean energy goals** are fundamentally **at odds** with the rapid expansion of data centers. These facilities require massive, **uninterrupted baseload power**, which cannot be met through **wind and solar energy alone**. Unlike states with large, open landscapes for renewable development, **Maryland lacks the available land area to build enough solar and wind capacity to support large-scale data center growth.**

Additionally, Maryland is **at least 8 to 10 years away** from adding new **nuclear energy**, the only realistic zero-carbon source capable of providing the reliability and scale necessary to meet data center demand. Until Maryland has a **secure, long-term clean energy supply**, the expansion of data centers will **inevitably lead to higher fossil fuel reliance and greater dependence on energy imports from states like Pennsylvania and West Virginia.**

Rather than advancing Maryland's climate commitments, unchecked data center development will **drive increased transmission expansion and greater reliance on out-of-state fossil fuel generation**, putting Maryland further from its clean energy targets.

No More Data Centers Without Energy Self-Sufficiency

Maryland must recognize that **data center development is fundamentally an energy policy decision**. Until Maryland has a **comprehensive strategy** to supply the necessary power—including **requiring data centers to bring their own power generation**—no new data centers should be permitted. Otherwise, Maryland will be forced to build **even more transmission infrastructure** to import additional power, exacerbating the destruction of our state's **environment, farmland, and rural communities**.

Without clear policies ensuring energy adequacy, Maryland risks becoming even more dependent on out-of-state energy sources, driving up costs for residents while forcing unnecessary infrastructure expansion. A responsible approach would require that any new data centers meet **self-sufficiency criteria**, such as on-site generation or dedicated energy procurement, before approval.

We Must Understand the True Costs and Benefits

Maryland must fully evaluate the **true potential benefits** and **true potential costs** of data centers before making long-term commitments to support their expansion. We **cannot rely solely on data presented by data center developers**, who have **their own financial interests** in mind. Their reports often highlight short-term economic benefits while **ignoring long-term consequences**, such as:

- Increased energy imports and transmission expansion,
- Environmental and agricultural destruction,
- Higher energy costs for Maryland residents, and
- Strained grid reliability, forcing additional ratepayer-funded infrastructure.

Additionally, **we must not trade Maryland's long-term future for short-term economic gains**. While data centers may provide an initial economic boost, **once forests, farmland, and clean water are lost, they cannot be recovered**. This bill ensures Maryland makes **data-driven decisions** before allowing further expansion of **energy-intensive industries** that jeopardize our **environment, economy, and rural way of life**.

Recommendation

Stop MPRP, Inc. **strongly urges** the committee to issue a **favorable report on SB 116** to protect Maryland's environment, farmland, and energy security. Maryland must adopt an energy-first approach—ensuring new data centers do not force more transmission expansion at the cost of our communities and rural lands. Until that policy is in place, no new data centers should be permitted.

Respectfully submitted,
Joanne Frederick
President
Stop MPRP, Inc.
joanne.frederick@stopmprp.org
443.789.1382