

Testimony in Support With Amendments SB116

Senate Energy, Education, and Environment Committee 2/13/25 at 1:00 pm

Submitted on 2/11/25 at about 9:45AM

To Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

My name is Karen Holcomb. I live in Chestertown, Maryland, and I urge a favorable with amendment report on SB116. Thank you in advance for your consideration of support.

The findings of the proposed Data Study bill will provide policy makers with needed information surrounding Data Centers. Currently, the State is not collecting this information, which is a critical first step that allows for comprehensive planning, collaboration between the State and private utility entities.

But the Data Center Study does not go far enough. Whether it be the power needed for Data Centers, residential or commercial sectors, we need to address another driver of increased cost to ratepayers. We may need to review and amend prior well-intended climate and environment state mandates*, with which regional grid operators such as PJM, must comply resulting in the utilities companies incurring substantial increased costs for compliance that are passed on to the ratepayer. *(EmPower Maryland Efficiency Act (2008), Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (2004) and the Greenhouse gas Emissions reduction Act (2009).

PJM has repeatedly warned that Maryland's rapid phase out of fossil fuel generation is outpacing the ability to bring in new renewable sources of energy. In addition, consideration needs to be given to the impact of the forced fossil fuel closures and an over-reliance on current unreliable renewables. The utility provider is paying billions of dollars on expensive compliance mandates. In addition, the Reliability Must Run (RMR) agreement to prevent immediate grid instability is at a premium cost to the ratepayer.

Currently, the legislator's, the appropriate government agencies and community stakeholders have too little information to develop a comprehensive statewide flexible plan of how to generate cost effective reliable and environmental friendly sustainable energy. While related to shipping, the renowned climate scientist, Prof. James Hanson recently published groundbreaking research suggesting the change in shipping regulations has caused the planet to heat up. For some, his work raises serious concerns and questions over the rush to push out green initiatives without fully scrutinizing the wider impact they may have. This same concern may be a valid one for all of us as we take the opportunity to find future solutions to Maryland's current energy and environment issues.

The Data Center Study is a subset of the larger concern of a potential energy crisis in Maryland resulting from moving away to quickly from using, coal, natural gas and nuclear to maintain a stable reliable and affordable rates in producing electricity.

Can the Data Center Study be amended to include language that allows for future more comprehensive relevant studies around information needed to show the environment and cost impact of the transition to past and future Green Energy legislative mandates, best practices of mixed energy options and solutions to provide reliable and affordable energy to ratepayers. The end result could be a coordinated State and Environment Energy Generation and Distribution plan of fiscal stewardship, collaboration in partnerships around our energy and environment sustainability issues that impact both the taxpayer and the utility ratepayer?

Specific to Data Centers. Can the cost burden to generate the needed power the Data Center be placed on the Data Center entity using geothermal or other options that consider the impact on environment and ratepayer?

My hope is that together we can negotiate a bipartisan win-win situation for all the Maryland ratepayers, the environment and the public utilities grid operators. To accomplish the above we definitely do need the Data Center Study as proposed with amendment.