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Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 56 Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center - External Data Sharing With
Third-Party Data Centers for Multistate Reporting - Authorization
Bill Hearing Date February 4th, 2026
Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Michael Butkiewicz. I am an author and civic-education researcher from Montgomery County, and my work has appeared across regional outlets. I write today in support of SB 56, which establishes a new gated mechanism for sharing Maryland student and workforce data with third-party multistate data centers.

While the bill is thoughtfully constructed, it is necessary to be candid about its limitations. The third gate, though admirable in purpose, assumes a level of Board attentiveness and technical literacy that may not be feasible in practice. As BCI Build reports, the DMV region has “seen a significant concentration” of data centers, and more than 402 million terabytes of data are created each day.¹ In this environment, it is reasonable to question whether the Board is structurally equipped to manage such expansive and growing demands.

Comparable state longitudinal data systems indicate that reviewing a single data-use request can require several hours of staff time, and reviewing a dataset schema can require days. Requiring Board-level approval for each element, dataset, and project would multiply this workload substantially.

Even with these concerns, I am compelled to support this legislation. Given the rapid expansion of private-sector data-center deployment around Maryland, strengthening our processes, particularly within the first two gates, to ensure that any third-party data center meets tightened statutory and privacy requirements is essential to protecting Marylanders.

¹ Planned Data Center Construction in the DMV (BCI Build)

Data governance and privacy safeguards are vital on their own, but their importance grows as private-sector demand increases, especially among firms that, whether justifiably or not, often fail to meet meaningful standards of transparency.

An OECD report from late 2019 noted that data access and sharing “has not achieved its potential,” citing uncertainties about data ownership and reliance on opaque contractual agreements.² This concern is echoed in a 2019 Pew Research Center study finding that roughly half of Americans feel they have no control over who can access their online searches, and that most believe companies would not publicly acknowledge misusing consumer data.³

Please report favorably on SB 56.

Thank you.

² Enhancing Access to and Sharing of Data (OECD, 2019)

³ Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information (Pew Research Center, 2019)