



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 596 Large Load Customers - Electric System Interconnection and Demand Response Program

TO: Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee
FROM: Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate for the Climate
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **SB 596 - Large Load Customers - Electric System Interconnection and Demand Response Program**. We are a faith-based advocacy organization based on Unitarian Universalist (UU) Values, including Interdependence (honoring the interdependent web of all existence) and Justice (where all feel welcome and can thrive). Working to mitigate, adapt to, and build resilience for climate change is central to our beliefs. The **Large Load Customers** bill aligns with these values.

Data Centers, and other large load customers, are the leading driver of drastically increasing electricity rates. Electricity costs in some data center-dense areas have surged by over 250% in just five years. In the PJM region—the world’s largest power market—capacity auction prices spiked 800% in 2024, in large part due to data center growth. That year, consumers across seven PJM states paid \$4.3 billion more in electricity costs to cover deployment of new transmission infrastructure to serve data centers. These costs are placing extreme pressure on household budgets, particularly for low and moderate income Marylanders.

Unfortunately, no Maryland agency tracks and manages large load customers as they request power from a utility or start using electricity on our grid. So basically, the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) and ratepayers are being blindsided by the data center build out.

To help lower the ratepayer impact of data centers in Maryland, we need a two-pronged solution:

- First, we need to create a process for large load customers who interconnect to register their requirements for electricity usage with the PSC. This will help the state plan for these large increases while understanding the impact of these load growths on ratepayers.
- Second, we need to incentivize large load customers to reduce their consumption during those few peak hours during the year when excess demand is required. This will lower the need for “peaker plants,” (which are typically fueled by natural gas oil or coal plants, these are often older, less efficient plants that emit high levels of pollution). Reducing their power requirement can be done in a variety of ways. However, if they decide to retain the same level of electrical usage and just decrease demand from the grid, it has to be done with clean electric technologies that are located within the PJM territories.

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The bill provides solutions by creating both requirements and incentives for “large load customers” to address their impact on the grid and customer rates AND provide Maryland regulators with more information about—and control over—new large load customers’ interconnection to the electric system.

For these reasons, we urge this Committee to give **SB 596** a **FAVORABLE** report.

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