



SB596

Large Load Customers - Electric System Interconnection and Demand Response

Testimony before Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Hearing Date: February 26, 2026

Position: Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, my name is Naomi Lilac Gordon and I represent the 1700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition with 30,000+ members. We are providing written testimony today **in support of SB596**, which would ensure a reduction in harm and impact as data centers are increasingly built in our state. Furthermore, it would ensure that Maryland residents actually retain benefits from these coming tech incursions. I thank Senator Hester for introducing this bill.

Our federal government and this country's increasingly influential Silicon Valley tech class have hedged their bets on AI and are planning to build data centers all through our great nation. This will be placing unprecedented strain on our energy grid, which is already suffering from increasingly erratic weather patterns. Last summer the winds in Columbia grew so intense that my neighborhood faced a blackout for several hours. I don't think it's a stretch to imagine that as data centers increasingly populate our state, such occurrences will become more frequent.

In light of this, SB596 would create vital harm reduction strategies to help our communities contend with this. The bill contains incentives for data centers to engage in demand response, BTM, and sustainable, carbon-free, energy methods. My personal favorite aspect is that this bill would require that for every megawatt a data center uses, it pays a fee of no less than one thousand dollars. This money would be spent on the Electric Universal Service Program and the Empower Maryland Energy Efficiency Program. Quite a savvy technique, using data center energy usage to fund financial support for low-income Maryland residents with their energy bills, and support a sustainable and reductionist energy initiative in Empower Maryland.

This is a bill that would do a great deal of good in a shaky time where the future of energy remains unclear and at risk. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Naomi Lilac Gordon
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