

SB0596 - SUPPORT

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SB0596 – Large Load Customers - Electric System Interconnection and Demand Response Program

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
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Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is William Mascioli. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland, for more than 40 years. I am gravely concerned about the ever-looming climate crisis, and with the federal government's complete abdication of anything even close to a responsible energy policy, I am counting on Maryland to legislate thoughtfully and effectively; SB0596 does that.

We live in a data-driven society, so it may be unavoidable that “Large Load Customers” – i.e., data centers, will be an increasing part of our energy architecture. PJM projects 32 GW of load growth between now and 2030, with data centers accounting for about 30 GW—over 90%—of that growth. With the reinstatement of last year's SB0116—the Data Center Impact Analysis and Report—we can at least know the consequences of building data centers and will, I hope, proceed wisely. But in any event, data centers are going to seriously strain our grid and when the grid struggles to meet peak capacity on hot days—or cold ones, as more and more Marylanders convert from gas heat to electric-- blackouts, with dire consequences, will predictably ensue.

SB0596 would provide a solution to this problem by creating a demand response program (the “interconnection program” of the Bill's title) that will use carbon-free sources, industry-grade battery storage, and flexible loads to allow data centers to reduce their loads during peak hours. Further, the Bill requires that new data centers coming to Maryland provide 25% of their capacity load through battery storage, locally generated carbon-free means, or through demand response. The Bill gives new data centers that provide *100%* of their load capacity *and* pay prevailing wage rates permitting priority for load studies, permitting, and interconnection.

These measures will ensure that the burgeoning data-center industry will not just benefit billionaires, it will encourage carbon-free generation, battery storage, and load management instead of having the data centers heedlessly turning to diesel generation, with all its health and pollution issues, to meet peak needs. The Bill will further climate justice by requiring that data center developers contribute to a community benefit fund that assists low-income Marylanders through the Empower program. The larger the data center, the more a developer must contribute, at a rate of \$1,000 per MW.

Data Centers may be our future; with SB0596 we can make this a future we can live with. Accordingly, I urge a favorable report and thank you for your consideration.