

**HB0940: Large Load Customers – Electric System Interconnection and Demand Response
Program**

House Environment and Transportation Committee

Feb. 24, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Anne Manuel. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland, for more than 40 years. I am deeply alarmed about the threat presented by the climate crisis, and given the Trump Administration’s war on clean energy, I am counting on Maryland to take the lead in crafting responsible energy legislation. I strongly believe that HB0940 is an important step in that direction.

I have reluctantly come to accept that “Large Load Customers” – i.e., data centers, are here to stay, with all that implies for our energy infrastructure. PJM projects that data centers will account for an astonishing 94% of the load growth between now and 2030. Thanks to the reinstatement of last year’s SB0116—the Data Center Impact Analysis and Report—we can at least understand the implications of that growth and use that knowledge to inform policy. Without a doubt, data centers will profoundly strain our grid. As the grid struggles to meet peak capacity on hot or cold days, 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 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 resort to fossil fuels such as diesel generation, with all the associated health and pollution issues, to meet peak needs. The Bill will also promote 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.

The growth of data centers threatens to wreak havoc on our plans for a cleaner energy future. HB0940 is a major step towards protecting that future. Thank you for your consideration.

Anne Manuel
2021 Luzerne Ave
Silver Spring, MD. 20910