HB0120- UNFAVORABLE

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HB0120- Moratorium on Construction of New Data Centers - Co-Location and Generation Contingency

Environment and Transportation Committee
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Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

On behalf of Marylanders for Data Center Reform, I urge an unfavorable report on HB0120, a Moratorium on Construction of New Data Centers- Co-Location and Generation Contingency.

Marylanders for Data Center Reform, created by Nature Forward, represents over 40 Maryland social and environmental organizations, who are deeply concerned about the impacts of hyperscale data center development on ratepayers, water and air quality, and land use decisions. While we strongly believe that Maryland should take time to plan for data center development that is the least harmful to our land and communities, we must oppose HB0120 because it ties a moratorium on hyperscale data center development to a contingency that encourages data centers to colocate with new or existing natural gas generation. The proliferation of fossil fuels driven by hyperscale data center development is a public health concern and puts our state climate goals at risk. A study by Cornell University found that there are significant public health burdens and costs to Marylanders associated with pollution from diesel backup generators from data centers located in Northern Virginia. Here in Anne Arundel County, these health costs are estimated at $6.3M. The county with the highest health costs from out of state diesel backup generators is Montgomery County, estimated at $19.9M[1].

As pressure from artificial intelligence and electrification grows, it is imperative that we use the best available data and research to provide power to data centers that have the least damage and long-lasting impacts to ratepayers and the environment. Utility scale solar[2] and battery storage[3] are not only underutilized, they are the cheapest and fastest way to supply reliable generation to the grid. There are currently 6 solar and battery projects that are poised to leave the PJM que, representing approximately 1 GW of energy[4], which is equivalent to the generating capacity of Brandon Shores, the retiring power plant[5]. This bill does not reference and require these technologies, nor does it consider additional opportunities that provide immediate capacity to the grid such as demand response. Data shows that if the goals are to increase grid reliability, capacity, and reduce costs to ratepayers, then reducing barriers to

[1] https://arxiv.org/pdf/2412.06288
[2] https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=67005
[3] https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=63025
[4] https://insidelines.pjm.com/v3_retool-results_new-release_body/
[5] https://www.talenenergy.com/plant/brandon-shores-power-plant/

increase carbon free generation should be at the forefront of solutions. Instead this bill incentivises building fossil fuel infrastructure that is not only resource intensive, it is slower to build and interconnect to the grid compared to solar and battery storage.

In closing, Marylanders for Data Center Reform urges an unfavorable report for this bill. We have the opportunity now to leverage existing assets and technologies that are not only better for the environment and public health, they are cheaper, faster, and increase grid reliability.

Respectfully,

Center for Progressive Reform

Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fun

Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek

Maryland League of Conservation Voters

Nature Forward

Waterkeepers Chesapeake