



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

March 10<sup>th</sup> 2026

HB1196

**Data Centers - Standards for Operation and Siting  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1534**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**House Bill 1534** establishes important standards governing the operation and siting of data centers within the State of Maryland. The bill requires data center owners or operators to comply with certain operational standards and directs the Maryland Department of the Environment to adopt regulations addressing sound and vibration controls as well as requirements related to backup power generation. In addition, the legislation prohibits local approving authorities from authorizing the construction of data centers on certain agricultural lands and requires applicants, under certain circumstances, to submit reports to local approving authorities detailing aspects of the proposed project.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that as Maryland continues to expand its digital infrastructure, development occurs in a manner that protects communities, natural resources, and local economies. Data centers can bring economic benefits and technological advancement, but without proper standards, their construction and operation can create environmental challenges, excessive noise, and increased strain on infrastructure. This bill provides clear guidelines to help balance economic growth with responsible land use and environmental protection. The benefits of these standards extend across Maryland's communities. By establishing clear operational requirements, the bill helps safeguard neighborhoods from disruptive noise and vibration while ensuring responsible management of energy and backup power systems.

Catholic Social Teaching calls us to care for creation and to pursue development that respects both people and the environment. The principle of stewardship reminds us that the Earth and its resources are gifts entrusted to our care, and we must use them responsibly for the benefit of present and future generations. By protecting agricultural land, addressing environmental impacts, and ensuring responsible oversight of large-scale infrastructure, this bill reflects a commitment to the common good and the dignity of all people who depend on healthy communities and ecosystems. Protecting agricultural land preserves an essential part of Maryland's economy and food system while maintaining the character of rural communities. Families benefit when development decisions prioritize public health, environmental stability,

and long-term sustainability. These protections help ensure that technological progress does not come at the expense of community well-being or environmental health.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 1534**.