



Testimony Supporting HB 940
House Environment & Transportation Committee
February 20th, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Maryland congregations of many faiths working together through Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa), we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 940 – Data Center Clean Capacity.

Across our faith traditions runs a common thread: **we are called to be wise stewards of creation and to protect the most vulnerable among us.** Economic development cannot come at the expense of our communities. As data centers and large-load customers drive unprecedented electricity demand in Maryland, we insist that real human wisdom – not artificial intelligence or corporate interests – drive our decisions.

Planned data centers are driving up projected electricity load, putting pressure on our grid and risking higher costs for everyday Marylanders. Because utilities must plan for projected demand, even when some of that demand is speculative or duplicative, Marylanders could be left paying for overbuilt infrastructure if projects fail to materialize or relocate. For so many of our families already struggling with rising energy bills, this risk is not abstract. It is a matter of economic dignity and household stability.

This bill offers a faithful and practical solution to this problem in a few key ways.

First, the bill embraces demand response and load flexibility. HB 940 establishes a voluntary demand response program for large-load customers (like data centers) over 25 MW, administered by the Public Service Commission, and ensures these reductions come from battery storage, flexible load, or other non-emitting resources. This reduces strain on the grid while avoiding additional pollution that harms frontline communities.

Second, the bill accelerates clean energy solutions. By directing the Maryland Energy Administration to identify surplus interconnection capacity at existing generator sites, HB 940 allows new battery storage and zero-emission resources to come online more quickly. In our faith communities, we understand that time matters when responding to urgent needs. Climate change, grid reliability, and affordability are urgent. Unlocking existing infrastructure to deploy clean capacity reflects wise stewardship of what we already have.

Third, HB 940 ensures that data center facilities and other large-load customers contribute fairly to the system they rely on. By requiring at least 25% of load capacity to be matched with storage, carbon-free generation, or demand response, we align economic development with moral responsibility. Work must be dignified, and growth must be just.

Finally, the community benefit fee ensures that as large-load customers seek to interconnect, they contribute to energy assistance and efficiency programs for low-income households through EmPOWER. Our traditions teach that we are judged by how we treat those with the least. Those demanding more and more energy must not be allowed to impose higher costs on the state's most vulnerable people, but be required to provide meaningful relief.

HB 940 reflects the values we lift up every day in our congregations: stewardship, justice, shared responsibility, and care for our common home. It insists that those building new things in Maryland do so mindful of their impact on our neighbors and our common home. For these reasons, Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa) respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 940.

