



Frederick County Council Steven J. McKay, District 2

HB1534 – Data Centers – Standards for Operation and Siting

DATE: March 10, 2026
COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation Committee
POSITION: Favorable
FROM: Steven J. McKay, Frederick County Council, District 2

I would like to strongly urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to give HB1534 a favorable report to create stronger standards for data center development in Maryland.

As a member of the Frederick County Council and having recently debated legislation to enact stronger regulations on data centers, I found myself frustrated by our lack of authority in several key areas. This bill addresses those areas and will provide a powerful backstop to our local efforts to regulate and minimize the impacts of data center development on adjoining communities, and on our electrical infrastructure. Specifically:

- HB1534 sets strong – and urgently needed – standards for data centers proposed in proximity to schools, including setbacks for electrical substations and transmission lines, and strong air quality monitoring provisions.
- HB1534 creates strong sound and vibration monitoring requirements, including addressing the critical dB(C) issue. I'm very pleased to see these standards address the dB(C) sound range. This is a measurement of lower frequency sound disturbances, often characterized as the low, throbbing noise that travels far, and penetrates walls and greatly impacts the daily lives of those living near data centers.
- HB1534 also limits when backup diesel generators can be tested, avoiding harmful noise and air pollution impacts on nearby schools and residences.
- HB1534 also establishes a critical new requirement for on-site battery storage for data centers with higher electricity requirements, reducing, if not eliminating, the need for noisy and polluting diesel generators.
- Critically, HB1534 also provides more “teeth” to local authorities, enabling emergency stop work orders, higher and more meaningful fines, and permit revocation for data center operators who flout the restrictions.
- Finally, HB1534 sets a strong and reasonable standard for where data centers should NOT be located – on prime farm soils, on land under preservation easements, or on land within a Rural Legacy Area.

For these reasons and more, I strongly support this bill and urge you to report a favorable recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve McKay". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Steve McKay
Frederick County Council, District 2