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**Oppose HB 120:**  
**Testimony Opposing Data Center Moratorium**  
**As Means To Encourage New Gas & Nuclear Plants**

Position: Unfavorable

On behalf of the nonprofit Food & Water Watch and its 40,000 Maryland members, we submit this testimony in opposition of HB 120. Because of its goal of placing a moratorium on the construction of data centers for the purpose of encouraging the build out of new gas and nuclear power plants in the state, we urge the House to reject this bill.

The rush to build out new data centers in the state has raised critical questions about their impacts, including but not limited to, the amount of energy that will be required to run these facilities, and how data centers may continue to increase electricity bills for Maryland families. This bill, however, would only exacerbate the abundant problems data centers impose on Marylanders and ignores tackling many of their key problems.

Expanding the state's methane gas and nuclear power generation is not only the costliest way to generate energy in the state — a cost that ratepayers would ultimately pay — but also brings about its own negative health and environmental consequences to Maryland residents via air and water pollution.

While we support an immediate data center moratorium in the state, a legitimate moratorium bill would address multiple other issues this bill does not begin to touch upon. We need comprehensive protective legislation; this is not that bill.

As previously mentioned, data centers are causing electricity rates to skyrocket. The Department of Energy predicts that data centers will consume 12% of the nation's electricity by 2028, continuing to drive up rates across the board for ratepayers. In Maryland, officials have warned that data center buildout in Maryland could increase monthly bills by \$70.

Additionally, data centers consume massive amounts of water in order to cool servers and in powering them. This water usage can stress communities and drive up water rates which Maryland has historically struggled with. As of yet, the state has yet to come up with a comprehensive study of how the data center buildout would impact Maryland's water resources, many of which provide drinking water for residents.

Data centers also use hardware (eg. microchips and processing, memory, and storage components) that have an average lifespan of 2-5 years. It is estimated that the e-waste generated from the AI boom driving the growth of data centers could total up to 5 million tons annually by 2030. None of these e-waste concerns have been fully addressed by Maryland officials yet.

Other significant impacts include noise near data center operations and damage to home appliances due to the strain on the grid caused by reliability impacts from these same data centers.

What Maryland needs is a full-scale moratorium bill that would effectively address the many negative impacts that would come with the buildout of data centers to properly protect Marylanders. HB 120 does not do any of that. We urge the committee to reject this legislation and any other legislation that fast tracks the buildout of new data centers in Maryland without first scrutinizing if these data centers can coexist with the health and safety of Maryland residents over the long term.