



February 20, 2024

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Maryland's leading regional land trust operating in Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Talbot, and Dorchester counties, is opposed to passage of House Bill 579: Critical Infrastructure Streamlining Act out of the Economic Matters Committee.

While data center development could be an important element of Maryland's high tech economy of the future, the backup power they require is comparably low-tech: dirty, noisy, diesel-fueled generators. ESLC urges the legislature to protect strong project review protocols that ensure only the best projects move forward to development by opposing passage of HB 579.

House Bill 579 would exempt many of the impacts of data center construction from robust review as part of the extant Maryland Public Service Commission's Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) process. As Maryland has set goals for carbon emissions reductions and has begun the long, but necessary, process to move away from fossil fuel combustion, projects dependent on expansion of carbon emissions should be subject to reasonable review, which in the case of data centers already exists and should be retained.

Exempting data center projects from CPCN review means the state loses an important opportunity to hold individual projects accountable at the design phase, as well as review the entirety of the Maryland data center landscape as it evolves to ensure these projects are not having an outsized impact on the state at collective scale. Review protocols like those in the CPCN process for data centers, which include strong public comment components, help to improve projects as they move forward, and as such, should be protected, not eliminated.

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy appreciates the chance to submit our thoughts on this legislation and stands ready to be helpful in any way.

Sincerely,

Steven K. Kline
President

