

February 24, 2026

RE: Montgomery County Council Public Hearings on Bill 4-26 (Task Force on Data Centers) and ZTA 26-01 (Commercial Uses- Data Centers)

Dear Councilmember,

Please impose a moratorium on the approval of large “hyper-scale” data centers at least until Montgomery County and the State of Maryland complete their respective data center impact studies to assess potential economic, environmental, noise and public health impacts on County and State residents.

I also request that ZTA 26-01 be tabled until the State of Maryland and Montgomery County complete their respective assessments.

1) Legislation developed by Montgomery County must first define what type or types of data centers the legislation is meant to regulate. The impacts of large hyper-scale data centers are very different compared to small sized data centers. ZTA 26-01 fails to recognize that different types will require different sets of regulations.

2) I prefer that the construction of large hyper-scale data centers be prohibited, but if built, restricted to industrial zones listed as IH (heavy industrial) and IM (moderate industrial). Land zoned IL (light industrial) should not be permitted.

3) Water quantity and quality must be protected. Large hyper-scale data centers requiring water for cooling purposes must not be permitted to draw raw water from rivers and streams or to use potable tap water during drought emergencies. The use of ground water aquifers to cool data centers must be prohibited under all circumstances. Water-cooled data centers have the potential to generate harmful PFA's, heavy metals, phosphorus pollution, glycols and other hazardous chemical contaminants. Strict regulations must be in place to ensure that waste waters and sludge wastes derived from data center cooling systems are filtered, treated and disposed of in a manner that does not contaminate our land, soils and streams.

4) Large data centers need to be located where an adequate electric grid already exists. New transmission lines must not be built to serve them due to the negative environmental impacts to farms, forests, rural zones, streams and wetlands.

5) Why do we want to severely undermine our climate goals by allowing large DC's?

In conclusion, I totally support Bill 4-26 but ask that you table ZTA 26-01 until the State of Maryland and Montgomery County complete their studies. In the mean time please impose a moratorium on the approval of all large data center applications.

John Parrish

