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Select Committee on Data Centers

Ohio State Legislature

June 11th, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs Holmes and Chavez, and Members of the Select Committee:

I want to take a moment to thank you for your work on the Select Committee on Data Centers. As Ohio seeks to become a midwestern hub for technology and innovation, the work of this select committee is critical to ensuring that the state can be best positioned to reap the benefits of participating in the digital economy without leaving Ohioans across the Buckeye state worse off.

I write to you today to highlight the incredible opportunity that data centers can bring to the state of Ohio, correct common errors around their usage of resources, and outline the keys to a potential path forward that protects consumers, welcomes data centers, and protects the stability of the grid in Ohio.

Data centers represent a multi-billion-dollar investment opportunity in the state of Ohio. Beyond the direct engineering and operations roles, these facilities also create a lot of jobs in the immediate future in construction and trade jobs. There is a massive need for roles in this space. So much so that this week, Meta announced a \$115 million investment into America's Workforce Academy. The initiative funds comprehensive training, lodging, and stipends to speed up the process of getting workers into high-demand careers like electrical work, fiber optics, mechanical systems, and plumbing. In allowing data center development to occur and flourish, Ohio can position itself as the primary beneficiary of these massive private investments in workforce development, giving the Buckeye state a stable, family-supporting career opportunity for its people.

As the committee evaluates data center operations, it's critical to separate common misconceptions from operational realities regarding their usage of water and electricity. Data Centers offer a predictable, flat electrical load. Unlike residential or manufacturing energy demands, which are more variable, data centers allow utilities to plan grid capacity with more precision. The solution to more energy demands is working with partners to bring more

power to the grid, or to allow for data centers to develop their own power sources on-site.

When it comes to water, some popular reporting would suggest that data centers are massive consumers of water. Often in these instances, they are comparing the usage of water relative to other residential use cases, which is deeply flawed. Furthermore, the industry has invested heavily in implementing advanced closed-loop cooling systems, which have reduced the consumption rates. The amount of water used by data centers is just a fraction of some of their other industrial counterparts.

A lot of ink has been spilled discussing the impact of data centers on rising electricity prices. It is worth noting that in areas that have a significant presence of data centers, that is not the trend that is being observed. States that have the steepest increase in energy costs are also the same states that have deeply flawed energy policies that drive up costs that are then passed onto consumers. However, to ensure that families in Ohio are not hit with such potential burdens, we recommend that the committee design any potential legislative proposals around the framework established by the Trump administration's Ratepayer Protection Pledge, an effort of which many leading technology and data center companies have signed onto.

In mirroring this pledge, Ohio sets clear expectations that ensure that data center developers do not pass on unintended costs associated with their specific grid connection demands to consumers. The pledge protects residential ratepayers from subsidizing large-scale industrial projects.

Furthermore, the legislature should explore how it can streamline its regulatory environment to improve conditions on the ground in Ohio. Currently, the bureaucratic timeline to approve, permit, and construct energy infrastructure contributes to costs. Delays in upgrading the grid create bottlenecks that create more costs and also make power distribution less efficient.

We urge the Select Committee to identify and recommend policies that lift these administrative barriers. In expediting the permitting process for energy infrastructure upgrades, the state can ensure that necessary upgrades to the grid are done in a timely and cost-effective fashion. Speeding up these projects can help data centers get online faster, but also save Ohio ratepayers money by reducing the cost inflation of projects while simultaneously enhancing overall grid reliability in the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this critical topic. We welcome the opportunity to be a resource for the committee as you weigh potential solutions in this arena.