



**Representative Kellie Deeter**  
House District 54

Chair Claggett, Vice Chair Workman, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the Technology and Innovation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 646, which establishes a Data Center Study Commission specific to the state of Ohio.

I want to begin by acknowledging the Ohio Chamber for their work on the economic impact of data centers, as well as The University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service for their recent report on data center growth and key findings specific to the Great Lakes region.

The rapid expansion of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and the continued digitalization of services has driven significant growth in data centers across the United States—and increasingly here in Ohio. This is no longer a future issue; it is a present and accelerating reality.

Ohio is already being targeted for large-scale development proposals, and communities are being asked to evaluate projects of unprecedented size and complexity in real time. Since 2014, data center growth has surged, with states like Ohio emerging as leading hubs, alongside Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania. Projections indicate that by 2030, Illinois and Ohio alone are expected to capture a significant share of new data center development—potentially accounting for nearly half of regional sites—with planned and under-construction facilities increasing by more than 40 percent, according to a January 2026 regional analysis of Great Lakes data center growth trends.<sup>1</sup>

While this expansion presents economic opportunities, it also introduces complex and immediate challenges. New data centers can require 10 to 40 times more power than facilities built prior to 2015. They can be constructed within one to two years, while substations, transmission infrastructure, and generation assets often take significantly longer to develop. This creates growing risks related to grid reliability, affordability, and long-term energy planning, particularly in states like Ohio experiencing concentrated and accelerated development.

Constituents across Ohio are raising a range of concerns about the impacts of data center proliferation, including infrastructure capacity, energy demand, environmental sustainability, land use, and long-term fiscal exposure. These developments are increasingly proposed in rural and semi-rural communities, where concerns are heightened regarding farmland preservation, water quality, community character, and environmental impact.

Given the scale and speed of this growth, it is both prudent and necessary that we, as policymakers, take the time to fully understand its implications and adopt an informed, integrated approach—one that considers energy policy, water usage, land use planning, tax structure, and long-term infrastructure capacity.

This is not about stopping development—it is about ensuring that growth is responsible, transparent, and aligned with the long-term interests of Ohio communities.

As these facilities increase in both size and intensity, state and local governments are being asked to make decisions without a comprehensive understanding of cumulative impacts. There is a better, more sustainable approach.

House Bill 646 addresses this gap by establishing a 13-member Data Center Study Commission, with members appointed by the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, and the Governor. The commission will be tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of data center development in Ohio over a six month period.

Importantly, the bill requires the commission to hold public hearings and solicit stakeholder input, ensuring that local communities, industry experts, utilities, and policymakers all have a voice in the process. This creates a structured opportunity to better align state policy with local decision-making, rather than placing communities in a reactive position.

At the conclusion of its work, the commission will issue a formal report with findings and recommendations to guide future policy decisions.

This approach allows Ohio to thoughtfully evaluate both the opportunities, and the risks associated with this rapidly growing sector—grounded in data, transparency, and public engagement.

By studying these issues now, we position Ohio to lead, not react, to one of the fastest-growing sectors of our economy.

House Bill 646 ensures that we are not making long-term decisions with incomplete information but instead building a framework that supports both economic growth and responsible stewardship of our communities.

I respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 646 so we can move forward with clarity, transparency, and foresight.

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## Footnote

<sup>1</sup> João-Pedro Ferreira, William Shobe, Terance Rephann, and Matthew Scheffel, *Economic, Fiscal and Energy-related Impacts of Data Centers in the Great Lakes Region*, Center for Economic & Policy Studies, report prepared for The Joyce Foundation, January 13, 2026.

