

To: Representative Click and Janae Myers Re: HB 646 — Data Center Study Commission

Dear Representative Click and Ms. Myers,

My name is Larry Thode. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on HB 646, the Data Center Study Commission Bill. I respectfully request that the State of Ohio enact a 1–5 year moratorium on new data center construction while the Commission studies impacts and recommends siting and safety standards. I support technology and innovation, including AI, but we must ensure that facilities are sited and operated in ways that protect children, families, and essential resources.

Key concerns:

1. Proximity to schools and new housing
  - The planned AWS site on Vans Valley Road is near Big Walnut schools and just up the road from a 382-home development. Before placing large industrial facilities in or near residential and school zones, the Commission should evaluate potential impacts from continuous noise, light pollution, and construction traffic, and set minimum setbacks and buffering requirements.
2. Diesel generators and fuel storage
  - Data centers often rely on large banks of diesel backup generators and store substantial quantities of diesel fuel. Concentrating hazardous fuels close to schools and homes raises fire, spill, and air-quality risks. Standards should address tank design, secondary containment, spill response, air emissions, and preventive maintenance, with independent inspections and public reporting.
3. First responder access and safety
  - In Jerome Township, public records indicate the fire chief raised concerns about AWS site access and delays in emergency response. Any company operating in Ohio must coordinate proactively with first responders, ensure unimpeded access, and comply with incident command protocols. The Commission should recommend clear requirements for emergency access routes, drills, site maps, hazardous materials registers, and accountability for compliance.
4. Water usage and drought resilience
  - Central Ohio has experienced low reservoir levels and recent drought conditions. Data center cooling can strain local water systems if not managed with efficiency measures. The Commission should study cumulative water impacts, require high-efficiency or

alternative cooling (including closed-loop systems), and align withdrawals with drought contingency planning so essential community needs come first.

Recommendations for HB 646:

- Establish statewide siting standards
  - Minimum setbacks from schools, hospitals, and residential zones
  - Cumulative impact assessments for noise, light, air emissions, traffic, and grid stability
  - Requirements for hazardous fuel storage, spill prevention, and air-quality controls
  - Mandatory coordination and access protocols for first responders
- Transparency and accountability
  - Public reporting on emissions, water usage, fuel storage, and incident logs
  - Independent inspections and enforcement mechanisms
  - Community engagement during planning and operation
- Resource safeguards
  - Water-efficient cooling standards and drought-responsive operating plans
  - Grid impact studies and resilience measures to prevent local outages

We must put people ahead of the dollar. I am not against data centers or AI—I am against siting and operational choices that create avoidable risks for children, families, and first responders. A time-limited moratorium paired with a thorough, evidence-based study will help Ohio grow responsibly and sustainably.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 646 and for protecting our communities.

Respectfully,

Larry Thode