



RE: HB646, An Act to Create the Data Center Study Commission

Contact: Christian Koch, Manager, Midwest Policy – ckoch@ceres.org

Chairman Claggett, Vice Chair Workman, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the House Technology and Innovation Committee, thank you for the opportunity for Ceres to provide interested party testimony to HB 646, an act to create a Data Center Study Commission.

Ceres is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to accelerate the transition to a cleaner, more just, and resilient world. We inspire investors and companies — including the 80 major brands that make up the [Ceres Policy Network](#) — to advance actions and advocate for policies that reduce pollution and invest in solutions to build a cleaner economy.

Ceres supports the creation of an Ohio Data Center Study Commission. However, we believe HB 646 should be strengthened to match the scale and complexity of the task. The rapid expansion of data centers raises important questions regarding grid reliability and costs, water use, environmental impacts, and local economic effects. A formal commission can help lawmakers better understand these issues and craft informed policy responses.

Specifically, **Ceres recommends extending the length of the Commission’s required study period, increasing the number of required hearings, and broadening the Commission’s membership to include subject-matter expertise and stakeholder representation.**

Expand duration of commission study period

HB646 requires the Commission to submit its findings and any legislative recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly within six months of the bill’s effective date. Given the nine required areas of study and the technical nature of the issues involved, we believe this timeline should be extended to allow for meaningful data collection, stakeholder engagement, and deliberation.

Other states examining data center impacts have generally provided at least 12 to 15 months for similar studies (**see appendix**). States such as Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Virginia have all adopted or proposed study timelines of one year or longer.

Extending HB 646’s study period to at least 12–15 months would better align Ohio with national best practices and ensure the Commission has adequate time to conduct a comprehensive, transparent, and stakeholder-driven review of this rapidly growing sector.

Increase Required Public and Expert Hearings

HB 646 requires the Commission to hold at least two public hearings and two expert hearings. Given the breadth and complexity of issues related to data center development—ranging from grid reliability and ratepayer impacts to water use, land

use, and economic development—this minimum may hinder meaningful input and analysis from stakeholders.

Additional hearings would allow a broader range of stakeholders, including businesses, industry representatives, local communities, consumer advocates, utilities, and technical experts, to contribute to the study. A more robust hearing schedule would improve the quality of the Commission’s findings and strengthen public confidence in its recommendations.

Broaden Commission Membership

HB 646 creates a 13-member commission composed entirely of members appointed by legislative leaders and the Governor. While this structure ensures representation from state leadership, it does not guarantee that the Commission will include the technical and subject-matter expertise necessary to fully evaluate the complex issues associated with data center growth.

Given the Commission’s charge, HB646 would benefit from the inclusion of members with demonstrated expertise in relevant fields. Requiring representation from those such as academic institutions, grid and utility experts, water resource specialists, economists, industry representatives, and consumer advocates would help ensure the Commission’s work is informed by practical experience and technical knowledge.

In closing, incorporating these changes will better position the General Assembly to guide Ohio’s evolving relationship with data centers and ensure the commission has sufficient time, expertise, and stakeholder input to comprehensively examine the many complex and interrelated issues associated with data centers and inform a more comprehensive final deliverable on data centers.

Sincerely,

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Appendix

In comparison to similar legislation under consideration in other states, HB 646's proposed study period is notably short. Most states examining the impacts of data centers have provided for study periods of 12 to 15 months to allow for a more thorough and informed process. **Other states have adopted or proposed study timelines of at least 12 months, including:**

- **Louisiana** – [H.C.R. 61](#) (report due no later than February 27, 2027)
- **Massachusetts** – [H.B. 495](#) (18-month study period)
- **New Jersey** – [A.B. 5466](#) enacted and considered [A.B. 5892](#) (both 15-month study periods)
- **North Dakota** – [H.B. 1579](#) enacted (2025-2026 study period with report submission due 2027)
- **Oklahoma** – [H.B. 3392](#) (report due no later than December 1, 2027)
- **Virginia** – [H.B. 658](#) (study completed by January 1, 2027)