



# OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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**Ohio Chamber of Commerce**  
*Interested Party Testimony – House Bill 646*  
*February 24, 2026*

Chair Claggett, Vice-Chair Workman, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the House Technology and Innovation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer interested party testimony on House Bill 646. I'm Rick Carfagna and I serve as Senior Vice-President of Government Affairs for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

For 133 years, the Ohio Chamber has served as the state's leading business advocate and represents over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness, and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

I want to begin by acknowledging what brought us here today: We are here because Ohio's innovation economy is growing and data centers are helping fuel that growth. At the same time, elected leaders across Ohio are hearing concerns from constituents about data center development in their communities. These concerns include energy demand, water use, environmental impact, and how these facilities fit into the fabric of their neighborhoods. You have a responsibility to be responsive to those concerns, and this committee's willingness to examine these issues through HB 646 reflects that commitment.

The Ohio Chamber approaches this bill as interested parties because we see both opportunity and responsibility in what it proposes. A well-structured commission can serve as a platform for verifiable information, diverse perspectives, and constructive dialogue - all of which are essential as Ohio navigates this period of rapid digital infrastructure growth.

In September 2025, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce Research Foundation released a comprehensive economic impact study on Ohio's data center industry, conducted by SRC EvalMetrics. The findings, available [here](#), demonstrate that data centers have become a significant driver of Ohio's economy:

- **Employment:** The industry supported approximately 95,200 jobs in 2024, a 148% increase from 2017. Each direct operations or construction job supports 1.6 additional jobs across Ohio's economy, creating a 2.6x employment multiplier.
- **Economic Output:** Total output rose from \$10.4 billion in 2017 to \$26.4 billion in 2024, while GDP contribution more than doubled from \$4.7 billion to \$11.8 billion.
- **State and Local Tax Revenue:** In 2024 alone, the industry generated approximately \$1 billion in combined state and local tax revenues. This includes property taxes, sales taxes on non-exempt purchases, income taxes from employees, and other tax sources. Between 2017 and 2024, cumulative state and local tax contributions totaled \$5.21 billion.

- **Fiscal Returns:** Over that same period, the industry received \$2.5 billion in incentives, producing a net fiscal surplus of \$2.71 billion and a 2.1:1 return on investment.
- **Market Position:** Ohio now ranks 4<sup>th</sup> worldwide in operational data center capacity and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the U.S. for hyperscale-owned facilities, with over \$40 billion in committed private investment.

By 2030, under baseline projections, this sector is expected to support roughly 132,500 jobs and contribute nearly \$20.2 billion annually to state GDP. This places it among Ohio's most productive and strategic economic sectors. These numbers matter. They represent real jobs, real tax revenue supporting schools and infrastructure, and real economic momentum in communities across our state. It's what has led, in part, to Ohio's listing as 5<sup>th</sup> overall in CNBC's *Top States to Do Business* rankings, including 1<sup>st</sup> in *Infrastructure* and 6<sup>th</sup> in *Technology and Innovation*.

I want to emphasize something particularly relevant as this General Assembly considers the fiscal landscape facing local governments. At a time when property tax elimination is being discussed for the fall statewide ballot, data centers represent a significant source of local government revenue that does not come from constituent wallets. The \$1 billion in annual state and local tax revenue generated by data centers in 2024 includes substantial property tax contributions from these facilities - revenue that supports schools, libraries, townships, and counties without asking more from homeowners and small businesses who are already stretched thin.

Economic benefits alone don't answer every question communities are asking. Residents want to know: What will this mean for my electric bill? Where will the water come from? What about environmental impact? Will my neighbors have good jobs? These are fair questions that deserve fact-based answers, rather than speculation, propaganda, reflexive opposition or blind advocacy. This is where HB 646 has real potential. A study commission can provide empirical data, create a public space for diverse voices, examine both benefits and challenges honestly, and inform smarter policymaking grounded in comprehensive analysis rather than anecdote.

Given that the bill does not explicitly guarantee commission representation from the data center industry or the broader business community, we encourage the sponsors and this committee to ensure that industry voices will be at the table. We believe the commission will be most effective if it includes those who can speak to operational realities, workforce impacts, technological advancements, and corporate commitments. These perspectives can complement those from community advocates, environmental and energy experts, economic development professionals, and local government officials navigating these decisions firsthand. A commission that brings these voices together can produce recommendations serving both Ohio's economic landscape and the quality of life in our communities.

The Ohio Chamber believes Ohio can be both a national leader in digital infrastructure and a model for responsible, community-centered development. Those goals are not in conflict, they require us to do the hard work of addressing infrastructure gaps, ensuring environmental stewardship, securing community benefits, and maintaining transparency.

Chair Claggett and members of this committee: the Ohio Chamber supports the intent of HB 646 to create a platform for verifiable information and diverse perspectives. We hope the commission will be

structured to include all relevant stakeholders, including industry, and that it will be empowered to examine both the opportunities and challenges before us with rigor and good faith.

We stand ready to contribute our research, our expertise, the convening power of our broad membership, and our commitment to solutions that serve Ohio's communities, workers, and economic future. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I'm happy to answer any questions.