



HB 579: Critical Infrastructure Streamlining Act

Position: OPPOSE

Date: February 22, 2024

Contact: Steve Black, Sugarloaf Alliance

Our organizations request an **UNFAVORABLE** report of HB 579: Critical Infrastructure Streamlining Act, from the Economic Matters Committee.

As proposed, HB 579 would result in exempting data center diesel backup from being reviewed by the Maryland Public Service Commission for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN). As Maryland shifts to clean energy to achieve its urgent climate goals, it would be a major step in the wrong direction to exempt large numbers of diesel generators that can produce amounts of electricity and pollution equivalent to many regional power plants.

When the Maryland Public Service Commission denied an exemption to a data center development last year, they did so based on its climate implications and air pollution from over 160 3-megawatt diesel generators required to run continuously, should there be loss of power due to weather or other events.

We are concerned by the bill's sweeping exemptions. As written, all backup diesel generators, of **any size**, in **any quantity**, **anywhere** in Maryland would be exempt from the CPCN process. The technical expertise and judicial role of the Public Service Commission would have no influence in these potentially massive generator projects.

We also worry about the precedent that could be set by exempting from the CPCN process power plant-sized complexes of diesel generators without opportunity for substantive public involvement. This is a significant concern, as for example, just at the Quantum Loophole site in Adamstown, over 1000 generators are expected to provide a total of 2.4 gigawatts of energy. That is enough energy to power 600,000 new homes, roughly two times the number of housing units in Baltimore.

The Public Service Commission, through the CPCN process, is also tasked with addressing Environmental Justice and Energy Equity issues. Under the terms of HB 579 the PSC would no longer use its regulatory authority to ensure that siting decisions do not disproportionately impact the environment of certain communities in light of the community's race, color, national origin, or income status.

The CPCN process is a well-established and clear process that allows for appropriate public involvement in projects of the size proposed by the data centers and should be retained for this new industry. We respectfully request an **UNFAVORABLE** report from this Committee on HB 579.

Respectfully submitted,

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