I am writing in strong opposition to H7695— AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE CORPORATION {LC5040/1} (Establishes property, tangible, sales and use tax exemptions as incentives for the location of qualified data centers in Rhode Island.)

I will be describing the downsides of data centers in my testimony. In regard to that, I find particularly egregious this section of the bill:

(3) Failure to approve or deny the application within sixty (60) days after the date the owner or operator submits the application to the director shall constitute approval of the qualified data center, and the director shall issue written certification to the owner or operator within fourteen (14) days.

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With the many serious implications of the approval of a data center, surely 60 days to approve or deny a particular application is an impossibility.

Similarly egregious and reckless is this:

(iv) The beginning and ending date of the sales and use tax exemption which shall begin on the effective date of the certification and be valid for thirty (30) years after the effective date.

At the exponential rate of growth of technology, there is no way to predict at what point this technology will become obsolete, and certainly prior to 30 years.

Data centers in RI are not inevitable, and should in no way be incentivized via long-term tax breaks. With the 38 Studios financial fiasco in mind, please recognize that a proposal's appeal to legislators as a harbinger of economic growth can ultimately create financial hardship for the state. The frenzy for AI that these data centers enable may in fact end up as a toxic tech bubble.

It is well-known that data centers are gluttons for electricity and water. I commend the RI senators and representatives sponsoring the current legislation regarding data centers in that you are grappling with the regulation of data center operations in order to prevent electricity rate hikes for residents, and to avoid potential restrictions on residential water use. However, the downsides of data centers go far beyond the issues of electricity and water. A full environmental impact study needs to be done before a data center can be considered in any location. And the environmental impact includes the quality of life of people living near these data centers. There has been a well-justified groundswell of opposition to data centers from communities across the country when people living near them actually experience the deleterious consequences.

Key points regarding data centers:

- Pose a threat to green space
- Degrade the soil
- Create air and water pollution
- Create noise pollution
- Increase strain on the electric grid
- Increase strain on water resources
- Increase carbon emissions
- Increase risk of childhood leukemia from power lines

According to Frank Carini from EcoRI:

> "Let's hope Rhode Island's plan to handle a fast-approaching tidal wave of data center projects doesn't result in the same annihilation of green space caused by a stampede of ground-mounted solar arrays during the twenty-tens.
>
> "Data centers are primed to be the next energy-related development **threat to Rhode Island's forestland**. … (emphasis added)
>
> "Proponents of the bills, tax deals, and data center development offer the same tired argument: a multimillion/billion-dollar industry will provide jobs and boost the local economy; they just need some taxpayer support, some corporate welfare, and some trees killed. ...
>
> "While developers look for public handouts, they conveniently ignore the fact data centers can place substantial strain on local land and communities, such as **environmental and public health impacts, the conversion of farmland and forests into industrial sites**, and, as [Senator Sam] Bell noted, higher utility bills. (emphasis added) …
>
> "**The U.S. AI boom — the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists considers it a toxic tech bubble that will burst — and the expansion of data centers it requires is largely powered by dirty fossil fuels, which means more climate and public health degradation. Food & Water Watch has noted data center expansion is extending the lives of old natural gas (methane) and coal-fired power plants and driving new methane power development.** (emphasis added)
>
> "The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit has also estimated that by 2028 the water needs of U.S. data centers for cooling could be as high as the indoor water needs of 18.5 million households."

https://ecori.org/energy-intensive-data-center-proposed-for-woods-of-smithfield/

Here is pertinent information from Environmental Health News:

> "**Data centers are estimated to use hundreds of billions of liters of water and emit millions of tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) every year, but a new article published in *Patterns* found that a lack of transparent reporting from tech companies means that the true environmental impacts are likely significantly underestimated.** (emphasis added)

> **"In short:**
>
> - The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimated that data centers consumed a total of 560 billion liters of water in 2023 and emitted 182 million tons of CO2 in 2024, but research suggests that these are likely significant underestimates.
> - Of 11 major tech companies (including Google, Meta, Amazon, and Apple), only three report the total electricity use of their data centers, and only two report their direct water use.
> - **Reporting on direct water use does not account for the water needed to generate electricity for data center operations (known as indirect water use).** Only Meta reported on their data centers' indirect water use. (emphasis added)
> - **None of the companies report specifically on AI-related environmental impacts, including greenhouse gas emissions, water use, or e-waste related to their operation.** (emphasis added)
>
> "**Key quote:**
>
> "'AI systems may have a carbon footprint equivalent to that of New York City in 2025, while their water footprint could be in the range of the global annual consumption of bottled water [446 billion liters].'"

https://www.ehn.org/data-center-lack-of-trasnparency

How well does this align with the RI Act on Climate? Not very well.

And then there is this from Environmental Health Sciences:

> "Data centers require massive electrical infrastructure to operate. This means new high-voltage powerlines and substations, industrial facilities built close to homes and schools, that will increase electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure to people. **Research links this type of EMF exposure to childhood leukemia and other serious health and environmental impacts. However, the U.S. government lacks safety regulations to protect against health effects from chronic exposure to the EMFs from power lines and electrical infrastructure.** (emphasis added)

https://ehsciences.org/data-centers-increase-electromagnetic-fields-emf-exposure/

For the sake of all Rhode Islanders and our beautiful natural environment, please reject H7695. Thank you

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