May 13, 2026

Honorable Mikie Sherrill
Governor
State House
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625-0001

Dear Governor Sherrill:

The undesigned organizations write to **urge you to use your emergency powers to order a moratorium on approving and constructing new data centers** using at least 20 megawatts of power until regulations or legislation are implemented to protect ratepayers and consumers, maintain electric grid reliability, and minimize environmental impacts. We will soon deliver to your office a petition signed by thousands of New Jersey residents requesting this moratorium. Indeed, a recent FDU Poll (available here) indicated that 65 percent of registered voters favor a ban on the construction of new data centers in New Jersey until more power plants can be built.

Your Executive Order Nos. 1 and 2 recognize that "the ongoing electricity affordability crisis in New Jersey constitutes an emergency" and that "a significant driver" of the electricity affordability crisis is demand growth coming from data centers. A 20-megawatt data center uses as much electricity as all the homes in Montclair. But little is being done at the state level to stop the unchecked growth of data centers with the concomitant increase in electric rates they will bring. The goals of the Executive Orders cannot be met without both fundamental changes in PJM and a moratorium.

A moratorium is also needed to protect the environment and the health and well-being of New Jersey residents. Data centers:

- use enormous amounts of water, limiting availability for other uses;
- create the risk of contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAS), "forever chemicals" that are linked to a host of diseases;
- create air and noise pollution;
- negatively impact the quality of life in the communities where they are located; and
- make our statutory climate goal of reducing greenhouse gases difficult if not impossible to achieve. Based on PSE&G's five-year estimate of growth in data centers from 785 megawatts to 3,084 megawatts, New Jersey's greenhouse-gas emissions will increase by 13 million metric tons, which is 19 percent of the state's 2030 target.

The protection of New Jersey's water resources is critical at this juncture, especially as the state has been under drought conditions since October 2024 with the exception of three months in the summer of 2025. Data from the Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist indicate that due to climate change, we should expect and manage for longer periods of dryness and the potential for extended droughts. The large volume of water consumed by large-scare data

centers is likely to significantly limit water availability for agriculture, housing, and new and redevelopment opportunities, as well threaten substantial damage to the environment.

Numerous Democratic and Republican governors of New Jersey have previously ordered moratoriums until safeguards are in place to protect the public interest and prevent irreversible harm. We urge you to do the same here.

We have appended an addendum detailing our concerns. We will follow up soon with a copy of our petition and will contact your staff to work together on this important issue. I can be reached on behalf of the undersigned organizations at jaclyn@pinelandsalliance.org or 609-859-8860 x 118.

Sincerely,

Jaclyn Rhoads, Executive Director, Pinelands Alliance

CWA Local 1081, David Jude Weiner, President

350NJ-Rockland, Ted Glick, President

ACLU of New Jersey, Ami Kachalia, Senior Policy Strategist

Action Together New Jersey, Winn Khuong, Executive Director

ANHE-Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, Jill Aquino-RN, MSNurse

Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, Jennifer Coffey, Executive Director

BlueWaveNJ, John Reichman, Environmental Chair

Camden for Clean Air, Kevin Barfield, Executive Director

Center for Environmental Transformation, Jon Compton, Executive Director

Clean Water Action, Amy Goldsmith, NJ State Director

Climate Defenders, Griffin Sinclair-Wingate, Organizing Director

Climate Reality Project – NJ, Brian Russo, Chair

Climate Revolution Action Network, Ben Dziobek, Executive Director

Coalition for Peace Action, Rev. Robert Moore, Executive Director

Coalition to Ban Unsafe Oil Trains, Paula Rogovin, Chairperson

CWA Local 1037, Ken McNamara, President

DivestNJ, Ken Dolsky, Co-chair

Don't Gas The Meadowlands Coalition, Ken Dolsky, Co-leader

ECJ Committee - New Jersey State Conference – NAACP, Keith Voos, Chair, ECJ Committee, NJ State Conference - NAACP

EcoPoetry.org, Daniela Gioseffi, Founding Director Webmaster

Empower NJ, David Pringle, Steering Committee

Faith in New Jersey, Charlene Walker, Executive Director

Food & Water Watch, Matt Smith, NJ Director

Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, Fred Akers, Operations Manager

GreenFaith, Tracey Stephens, NJ Organizer

Ironbound Community Corporation, Alejandra Torres, Assistant Director of Advocacy & Organizing

JC Heights Parents, Philippia Athanasiou-Vaartstra, Founder

Latino Action Network, Javier Robles, President

League of Women Voters of New Jersey, Jesse Burns, Executive Director

Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership, Heather Fenyk, Executive Director

Make the Road New Jersey, Nedia Morsy, Director

Merchantville Democratic Committee, Joseph Bouvier, Vice Chair

MoveOn.org Hoboken RESIST!, Liz Ndoye,Facilitator

Musconetcong Watershed Association, Ben Yaskulka, Policy and Outreach Manager

New Jersey Citizen Action, Dena Mottola Jaborska, Executive Director

New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, Brooke Helmick, Director of Policy

New Jersey Environmental Lobby, Anne Poole, President

New Jersey Forest Watch, Ken Dolsky, Vice President

New Jersey Highlands Coalition, Elliott Ruga, Policy and Communications Director

New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, Milady Ramos, Policy Analyst

New Jersey Poor People's Campaign, Karen Szczepanski, Advocate Tri-chair

NJ Working Families Alliance, Sunni Vargas, Political Director

Northjersey Pipeline Walkers, Diane Wexer, Founder

NY/NJ Baykeeper, Greg Remaud, Baykeeper & Executive Director

Operation Grow Inc, Sharonda Allen, Executive Director

People Over Pipelines, Agnes Marsala, President

Piscataway Youth Progressive Organization, Juhi Rawal, Vice President

Raritan Headwaters, Mara Tippett, Executive Director

Salvation and Social Justice, Racquel Romans-Henry, Director of Policy and Advocacy

Social Action Committee of Temple Emeth, Paul Kaufman,Committee Member

Social Action Committee of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County, N J, Meredith Sue Willis, Chair Person

SOMA Action Climate, Phoebe Spanier, Committee chair

South Jersey Democratic Socialists of America, Ryan Clare, Co-Chair

South Jersey Progressive Democrats, Kate Delany, President

Sustain SJ, Matt Williams, Chair

The Nature Conservancy, New Jersey, Phil Echevarria, Director of Government Relations

The Watershed Institute, Michael L. Pisauro, Jr., Esq., Policy Director

The Wei LLC, Kimi Wei, CEO

Third Act New Jersey, Jennifer Nielsen, Strategic Advisor

Third Act Union, Karen Szczepanski, Co-chair

thirdspace pARTners LLC, Lillian Cho, Principal

Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ, Rev. Charles Loflin, Executive Director

Waterspirit, Rachel Dawn Davis, Public Policy & Justice Organizer

Addendum

Exponential Growth of Data Centers

Because data centers are largely unregulated, there is not an accurate account of the number of data centers in New Jersey. Senate Bill No. 680 states that there were 73 in New Jersey as of March 2024. Another source lists the number at 117 (https://www.datacenters.com/locations/united-states/new-jersey).

What we do know with certainty is that the number of data centers is projected to skyrocket. In 2025, PSE&G alone was serving 39 data centers with a peak demand of 394 MW. This amount is expected to increase by approximately 800% to 3,461 MW by 2031. This is not sustainable.

Much of the current data center debate involves mega or hyperscale data centers using 100 MW of energy or more, such as the projects in Vineland and Kinnelon. 100MW is enough electricity to power roughly 80,000 households. The Vineland project will use 300MW and the Kinnelon project 250 MW.

But even a 20 MW data center uses as much electricity as all the homes in Montclair. There are already dozens of data centers operating in New Jersey that use 20 MW of power, and many data center owners own multiple sites whose combined demand often exceeds 100MW. For example, CSquare operates three facilities in Piscataway, Weehawken, and Secaucus with combined 127.2 MW usage.

Data Centers' Threat to Our Water Resources, Especially During Droughts

Data centers use enormous amounts of water for cooling purposes. A 100MW data center will use approximately 528,000 gallons a day, roughly equivalent to what 6,500 homes use. This will likely significantly limit water availability for agriculture, housing, and new and redevelopment opportunities and cause substantial environmental damage.

South Jersey is particularly vulnerable to the threat posed by data centers to water resources. Much of the area sits atop the Pinelands' 17-trillion-gallon Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer—a critical source of drinking water that also sustains streams, wetlands, and wildlife habitats. Heavy groundwater withdrawals could have cascading impacts across the region.

Cooling techniques in data centers may risk contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAS). These "forever chemicals" persist in the environment, including drinking water sources, and are linked to health issues including decreased immunity and increased risk of certain types of cancer, birth defects, and liver and kidney disease. Data centers, to reduce the significant cost of cooling their equipment, may use a process called two-phase immersion cooling, and some of the substances used in this procedure largely contain fluorine and carbon, which help create PFAS. A pause in the construction of data centers will allow policymakers and the public to learn more about the cooling systems these centers will use and any harm they may pose.

The protection of New Jersey's water resources is critical at this juncture, especially as the state has been under drought conditions since October 2024 with the exception of three months in the summer of 2025. Data from the Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist indicate that due to climate change, we should expect and manage for longer periods of dryness and the potential for extended droughts. The large volume of water consumed by large-scare data centers is likely to significantly limit water availability for agriculture, housing, and new and redevelopment opportunities, as well threaten substantial damage to the environment.

Data Centers' Climate Threat

Most if not all the data centers will be directly or indirectly powered by fossil fuels. The 300 MW in Vineland, for example, will be largely powered by gas turbines, making it the sixth largest fossil fuel plant in the state. Based on PSE&G's five-year estimate of growth in data centers from 785 megawatts to 3,084 megawatts, New Jersey's greenhouse-gas emissions will increase by 13 million metric tons, which is 19 percent of the state's 2030 target.

There is no requirement for data centers to use renewable energy, although we note Senate Bill No. 680 would require all electricity for certain artificial intelligence (AI) data centers and cryptocurrency mining facilities to be derived from new verifiable Class I renewable energy, energy from newly constructed nuclear power plants, or a combination of these sources.

New Jersey is statutorily required, pursuant to the Global Warming Response Act (N.J.S.A. 26:2C-58) to meet the U.S. Climate Alliance goal of reducing greenhouse gases by 50 to 52 percent by 2030. To our knowledge, no analysis has been conducted to determine whether the data centers will make this goal impossible to reach, which seems likely to be the case.

Local Decision-Making: Regional Consequences, and Examples of Bans on Data Centers

Data centers are often approved by municipal officials without the expertise or data to evaluate projects with regional impacts on power grids, aquifers, and nearby communities. The situation in the City of Vineland demonstrates the need for stronger statewide scrutiny. Developers built a data center before conducting any environmental assessment and before the community could respond because of a loophole in New Jersey's redevelopment law. This backwards approach—build first, ask questions later—should not be how major infrastructure projects are handled in New Jersey. The situation in Vineland highlights the importance of statewide scrutiny of data centers.

Local opposition to data centers – based on concerns about electric rates, water usage, noise pollution, climate impacts, and quality of life issues – is growing across New Jersey. Even the potential of significant tax ratables has not stopped one community after another from fighting or banning data centers; recognizing that their costs outweigh their limited benefits. For example, New Brunswick City Council voted unanimously to amend a redevelopment plan to remove data centers as a permitted use, and reinstate plans for a park, in February. Also in February, Phillipsburg Town Council unanimously approved a new ordinance on its first reading to prohibit data centers within the town's borders. In late March, Monroe Township Council, in

Gloucester County, introduced an ordinance that would remove data centers as a permitted use at a 159-acre redevelopment site.

Model Provided by Executive Order No. 7

In the spirit of careful review and transparent governance reflected in the early executive actions of the Sherrill Administration, a moratorium on data centers would follow the model of Executive Order No. 7, which imposed a 90-day moratorium on the proposal or adoption of new rules by State agencies. A temporary moratorium on data center proposals would, in that same vein, give policymakers and residents time to study impacts, develop clear standards, and protect communities.

Leading the National, Bipartisan Opposition to Unchecked Growth of Data Centers

Other states are already considering ways to slow the construction of data centers in order to better understand their effects on energy rates, public health, and the environment. In 2026 alone, bills that would enact moratoriums have been introduced in at least 11 states.

A Maine bill is the farthest along, having passed the Legislature and is awaiting Governor Mills' signature. It provides for a moratorium through November 2027 on new data centers using 20 MW of power, and it would create of the Maine Data Center Coordination Council to address the benefits, costs and risks of data centers "with the goals of protecting ratepayers, maintaining electric grid reliability, minimizing environmental impacts and enabling responsible and appropriately sited economic development."

At a time when New Jersey is already grappling with rising energy demand, aging grid infrastructure, and climate pressures on water resources, we face even greater strain on our electrical system and local water supplies if more large data centers are approved without thoughtful and comprehensive planning. Numerous bills have been introduced in the legislature to address some of the impacts of data centers, but none of them provide for a moratorium; stop the irreversible harm to ratepayers, the electric grid, and the environment from data center growth; or fully address the many issues that data centers raise. Taking a measured pause now will help ensure that decisions made today do not create irreversible harm tomorrow. This requires your leadership.

The Requested Moratorium

That leadership should start with an executive order that orders a moratorium on new data centers until legislation and/or regulations are in place that i) ensure that new and existing data centers pay their own way and do not cause the rates of other customers to increase through increased tariffs for large load customers and requirements that data centers produce their own power; ii) prevent data centers from degrading our water supplies or otherwise harming the environment; iii) require data centers to use renewable energy; iv) eliminate duplicative or questionable projects from forecasts in order to reduce PJM capacity costs; v) require public notice and hearings prior to the approving a data center permit; vi) require regular reporting and audits of data center energy and water usage; and vii) prohibit state subsidies for data centers.

The moratorium would also be a model for other PJM states to use to in order to further drive down PJM capacity costs.

Numerous Democratic and Republican governors of New Jersey have ordered moratoriums in analogous situations where developments and projects were paused in order to put safeguards in place to protect the public interest and prevent irreversible harm. For example, Governor Byrne ordered a de facto moratorium on all new development in the Pinelands until the Pinelands Commission, created by his executive order, prepared a comprehensive management plan (Executive Order No. 71, February 8, 1979); Governor Kean ordered a moratorium on developments in New Jersey's freshwater wetlands until the enactment of legislation that adequately protected freshwater wetlands, or for 18 months (Executive Order No. 175, June 8, 1987); Governor Florio ordered DEP to stop approving any solid waste management plans until a task force created by his executive order enacted recommendations (Executive Order No. 8, April 6, 1990); and Governor Whitman limited the approval of wastewater management plans until the existing water quality management planning rules were replaced (Executive Order No. 109, January 11, 2000).

All of these gubernatorial executive orders provide precedent for the Sherrill administration to follow to pause the construction of large-scale data centers in New Jersey in order to better understand their impacts on affordability, the environment, and public health.