

Submitter: Carol Wicker  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1586

Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 1586

Carol Wicker

Local Resident, Washington County  
Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carol Wicker, and I live near the area affected by SB 1586. This proposal is not abstract for my family or my neighbors. We ride our bikes past these sites, rely on the same water systems, and will live with the long-term consequences of decisions made here.

I am deeply concerned about the cumulative impact of large data centers on local water resources, particularly groundwater.

Data centers require enormous quantities of water for cooling. Much of that water is lost through evaporation, meaning it does not return to the local watershed or recharge aquifers. Once used, it is effectively removed from the system. Yet SB 1586 does not provide clear, enforceable answers about where this additional water will come from, especially during drought years or periods of high demand.

Groundwater impacts are not immediate. They often appear years later—after permits are granted, land is converted, and communities are left with declining wells and stressed ecosystems. At that point, the damage cannot be undone.

I am also concerned that there is no meaningful requirement to study the cumulative effects of multiple data centers operating in the same region. Each project may appear manageable in isolation, but together they represent a permanent and growing draw on finite local water and energy resources.

These facilities provide very few permanent jobs relative to their footprint. Anyone who travels past them can see that the parking lots are largely empty. The economic benefits are limited, while the impacts—water consumption, energy demand, and irreversible land conversion—are borne locally.

If large data centers are allowed to permanently consume local water and energy, why are they not required to offset that demand with on-site renewable energy such as rooftop solar—and if groundwater or municipal water supplies are strained years after approval, who bears responsibility?

Rural reserve land was designated for protection precisely because decisions made today create impacts that cannot be reversed decades later. Once groundwater is depleted and land is converted, there is no meaningful way to restore what was lost. I urge you to reject SB 1586 or substantially amend it to require enforceable water protections, cumulative impact analysis, and on-site renewable energy before irreversible land-use decisions are made.

Thank you for your time and consideration.