

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

I strongly oppose SB 1586. Small family farms play a vital role in the health, resilience, and identity of cities and communities. They provide locally grown food that is fresher, more nutritious, and less dependent on long supply chains that are vulnerable to disruption. By selling through farmers' markets, local grocers, schools, and restaurants, small farms keep food dollars circulating within the local economy, supporting jobs and strengthening regional self-reliance. Beyond economics, family farms preserve open space, protect soil and water through stewardship practices passed down through generations, and serve as living connections to a community's history and culture. For urban and suburban areas in particular, nearby farms offer educational opportunities, agritourism, and a tangible reminder of where food comes from—something increasingly important in a highly industrialized food system.

In contrast, the rapid expansion of large-scale data centers near homes and established communities can bring significant harms that often outweigh their benefits. While data centers may contribute tax revenue, they typically create relatively few long-term local jobs compared to the amount of land they consume. Their constant energy demands strain power grids, increase greenhouse gas emissions when powered by fossil fuels, and can drive up local electricity costs. Residents living near data centers frequently report noise pollution from cooling systems, visual blight from massive industrial buildings, and concerns about water use, as many facilities consume vast amounts of water for cooling. When placed near homes, schools, or farmland, data centers can erode quality of life and displace land uses that provide broader, more lasting community benefits.

Protecting small family farms while carefully regulating the siting of data centers is ultimately about prioritizing long-term community well-being over short-term gains. Farms contribute food security, environmental health, and social cohesion—benefits that compound over time and are shared widely. Poorly planned industrial development, by contrast, can permanently alter landscapes, strain resources, and leave communities with the consequences long after the initial economic incentives have faded. Thoughtful land-use decisions that value agriculture, homes, and community spaces help ensure that growth supports people and places, rather than undermining them. Please consider the detrimental impact that a data center would have on Hillsboros community and environment.