



**For the Energy and Technology Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
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Rivers Alliance was formed to fight for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, to provide education on water resources, and to advocate for any person or group striving to protect water. If you want clean, free-flowing and healthy rivers, and high-quality drinking water, Rivers Alliance is here to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following raised bill before you today.

SB 1292 AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY AND WATER EFFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DATA CENTERS – Support with Modifications.

This proposal does not go far enough to protect our water resources. It is imperative that we take steps to ensure that large data centers are not draining our most critical resource.

Recommendations:

1. **Prevent Exploitation of Water Resources:** Prohibit or cap discounts offered to data centers by water utilities.
2. **Mandate Water Efficiency Standards UP FRONT:** Require data centers to utilize recirculation and reuse systems to minimize water consumption.
3. **Strengthen Oversight of Drought Response Plans:** Require the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) to review utility drought response plans and make recommendations to ensure protections for all customers from data centers during drought conditions.

The Issue: Data Centers and Water Use

Large data centers consume **massive amounts of water**, comparable to the daily water supply of a city the size of **Middletown**. In **95% of cases**, this water comes from local utilities. They are using high-quality drinking water. Without proper regulation, these facilities pose a serious risk to **Connecticut's most critical resource: water**.

How Data Centers Use Water for Cooling:

1. **Recirculation & Reuse:** Water is cooled and reused, reducing waste.
2. **Discharge:** Water is treated as industrial wastewater and released into rivers, lakes, or oceans.
3. **Evaporative Cooling:** Water evaporates to cool systems, leading to a high level of consumption.

Regulatory Loopholes Leave Our Water Unprotected

- Unlike other large water users, **data centers are not required to obtain a water diversion permit from DEEP** because they source their water from utilities.
- **80% of water diversions in Connecticut are unpermitted** due to a longstanding exemption for withdrawals registered before 1983. These "registered" diversions face no environmental review—**no requirement to assess impacts on downstream ecosystems or water availability.**
- **Large-volume discounts** to attract data centers will leave customers of utilities whose rates are not regulated by PURA footing the bill for the increasing cost of everything that goes into processing, delivery and infrastructure maintenance through rate increases.

The Risk During Droughts

Water utilities have **drought response plans**, but these vary significantly. Industrial users like data centers are often **last to be asked to conserve**, despite their enormous water footprint. When a facility **consumes as much water as an entire city**, failing to restrict use during droughts can have **catastrophic consequences** for communities and ecosystems.

The Solution: Stronger Protections and Accountability

Due to deficiencies that exist in our regulatory structure there is little our agencies can do once a facility is operational. We must act now to ensure that data centers do not **drain our water supply.**

Water is a public trust resource. Let's keep it that way.