

February 17, 2026



Testimony of the American Lung Association
Supporting Senate Bill 729 and opposing provisions in Assembly Bill 840
In front of the Senate Committee on Committee on Utilities, Technology and Tourism

Chair Bradley and members of the committee:

Communities across Wisconsin are seeing data centers proposed at a record pace. Unfortunately, when data centers are powered by dirty energy, they can put lung health at risk. The American Lung Association is the oldest voluntary public health organization in the United States, and one of our four strategic imperatives is to champion clean air for all. When we are considering these new large projects there must be protections in place for our community.

More demand for data centers – for AI, cryptocurrency, data hosting and other needs – means more demand for electricity. That demand must be met with clean, renewable power to protect the health of local families. But too often, it's being met with fossil fuels that endanger health. We Energies has not retired the coal plants that had been slated to come offline in 2024. The Oak Creek methane gas plant is being expanded and similar projects are being developed around the state. Plus, many data centers use diesel generators for backup power on-site, subjecting local residents to cancer-causing particle pollution. All of this adds dangerous pollution into the air of the surrounding communities.

With over 4,000 data centers across the United States – and thousands more planned – energy demand is only growing. Major projects come with power needs that can exceed those of entire cities, and large projects should be considered carefully to protect the health and wellbeing of our communities. It is critical that data center power needs not add local pollution burdens and instead developers should ensure that new, non-combustion renewable energy resources are available for both baseline and backup power. The provision in section two of Assembly Bill 840, requiring that any clean energy generation happens on site at the data center is extremely problematic and limiting.

We have data that shows us how this impacts our communities specifically – the American Lung Association's ["State of Air" 2025 report](#) revealed that several Wisconsin counties, including in the Milwaukee metro area, received failing grades for air quality. This is concerning because [Wisconsin, and Milwaukee specifically, is regularly in the top five cities in the country for asthma prevalence](#). We have been seeing the cumulative health impacts from Milwaukee's nonattainment status for the 2015 ozone rule, we can't afford to exacerbate that.

In the face of [the EPA rolling back a historic number of evidence-based standards](#), we cannot ignore the science. Now is the time for Wisconsin to recommit to our climate standards and strengthen our air quality protections.

Data centers must be developed with sensitivity to local utility consumer costs, regional air quality and broader sustainability needs. Projects must be developed with full and fair opportunities for community members, health experts and air quality agencies to engage in permitting, siting and other decisions to ensure the cleanest technologies and community protections are in place. Senate Bill 729 moves us in the right direction on these issues - please support it.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Molly Collins
Advocacy Director for Wisconsin
262-395-1700 | Molly.Collins@Lung.org