



Testimony by Stephen Bauer – State Director District 10

Chairman King, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the rapid growth of data center development across our state.

My name is Stephen Bauer, Texas Farm Bureau State Director for District 10 and a rancher from Kerr County. I'm here testifying on behalf of Texas Farm Bureau.

First, I would like to say that Texas Farm Bureau appreciates the proactive steps Governor Abbott has taken through ERCOT and the PUC to ensure data centers are responsibly developing power for their projects.

Texas Farm Bureau supports responsible economic development. However, as data center development accelerates across rural Texas, it is critical that growth does not come at the expense of the natural resources, infrastructure, and working lands that support agriculture and rural communities.

Water remains one of our members' greatest concerns.

Across Texas, farmers and ranchers continue to face drought, declining aquifers, and increasing competition for limited water supplies. Many data centers can require water for cooling operations. Communities deserve clear information about how much water will be used, where it will come from, how much will be recycled, and what steps will be taken to minimize demand on local supplies. Agriculture, rural Texans should not find themselves competing for water because these questions were not answered on the front end.

Electric reliability is another significant concern.

Texas farmers and ranchers depend on reliable electricity to irrigate crops, operate livestock facilities, store grain, and power essential equipment. The scale of proposed data center demand raises legitimate questions about grid reliability and infrastructure needs. Texas Farm Bureau supports efforts to

ensure that reliability and affordability for existing Texans are not compromised as these projects move forward.

We also believe large-load electric customers should pay their own way.

Farmers, ranchers, homeowners, and small businesses should not bear the costs of infrastructure built primarily to serve some of the largest power consumers in the state. Texans deserve transparency regarding incentives, tax abatements, transmission investments, generation requirements, and other public resources connected to these projects.

We are also concerned about the continued loss of productive farm and ranch land across Texas.

We appreciate that some data center developers have tried to fund some local projects and make some local charitable contributions. But, these efforts don't address the loss of productive agricultural land these projects are causing. For example, the Nexus Data Center in Hubbard has already acquired over 4,000 acres. And, it is expected they will continue to acquire additional land. That land sits in the Blackland Prairie of Central Texas, which is considered to be some of the best farm land in Texas.

Data center developers can take action today to conserve agricultural land without a legislative mandate. We encourage them to explore those options.

Texas Farm Bureau, along with the Cattle Raisers and Wildlife Association, formed the Texas Agricultural Land Trust over 20 years ago to conserve working farms and ranches. It is the only land trust in Texas that is solely dedicated to protecting working farms and ranches.

We would encourage these data center developers to reach out to them and determine if they could partner with the Texas Agricultural Land Trust to keep valuable land in agricultural production.

We can certainly provide TALT's contact information if any of the data center developers would like to reach out to them.

Our request, today, is that rural communities and agricultural producers be given a meaningful voice in the development process. Transparency and local engagement should be expected, not optional. The burden of accommodating data facilities should not fall on rural Texans and agriculture.

If data centers want to operate in Texas, they should be prepared to pay their own way, secure their own resources, mitigate their impacts on natural resources and agricultural land, and be fully transparent about their plans.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

******END OF TESTIMONY******