

KY AAP KY Child Health and Climate Advocates Task Force
February 23, 2026
Meeting Summary

The agenda for this meeting was for Elisa Owen of the Kentucky Chapter of the Sierra Club to share information about the environmental impact of data centers. Julia Finch of the Kentucky Chapter of the Sierra Club also provided a legislative update. Please reach out to Libby Mims at libby.mims@louisville.edu if you need any additional information.

Elisa Owen, Senior Organizer, with the Kentucky Chapter of the Sierra Club, presented on the environmental impact of data centers. A link to a video recording of her presentation is [here](#).

- Data Centers are large buildings that house computers that distribute large amounts of data and applications. Support websites, cloud storage, artificial intelligence, and business applications.
 - o These centers use large amounts of power and water, and stress local infrastructure.
 - o If the industry doesn't come to the community, communities are stuck paying more to support the data centers without the benefit of new jobs.
 - o Ideally, data centers would be in partnership with a community that prioritizes health and well-being with a community agreement in place
- Data Center in Maysville, KY in Mason County (estimated population 16,000)
 - o This center uses 1.2 gigawatts in power, which is enough energy to power Orlando, FL (estimated population 350,000)
- How Data Centers Stress Local Resources
 - o Produce constant light and noise pollution.
 - o Require hundreds if not thousands of acres of land.
 - o Increase direct and indirect sources of air and water pollution.
 - o Increase electric and energy bills for local residents.
 - o Little to no transparency about health impacts.
- Health Impacts of Data Centers
 - o Air pollution from backup diesel generators and increased burning of fossil fuels to power their energy-intensive operations.
 - o Increased air pollution is associated with increased asthma and respiratory illnesses, increased cardiovascular diseases, and increased cancer risk in surrounding communities.
 - o Can have high water consumption for cooling from local water supplies.
 - This risks straining local water systems
 - Risk of PFAS contamination of local water
 - Harms local farmland, wetland, and natural space
- Goal with Policy and Regulation
 - o Do no harm agreement with data centers
 - o Limit water use
 - o Limit polluting diesel back-up power
 - o Distance from homes, schools, and parks

- Louisville has four data centers, but none are hyperscale data centers.
- The Public Service Commission recently ruled that LG&E may build two new natural gas power plants to serve future hyperscale data centers and extended the life of a coal power plant in Carroll County that was previously set to be retired in 2027.
- Communities cannot have economic development if we are burdening those same communities with higher energy bills and worse health to attract industry.

Julia Finch, Chapter Director of the Kentucky Chapter of the Sierra Club provided a legislative update

- Check out the Kentucky Chapter of the Sierra Club's [Legislative Action Center](#) for a list of all of the bills they are supporting and opposing.
- [SB 178](#) is particularly worrisome as it weakens Kentucky environmental protections to be no more strict than federal protections and creates impossible scientific hurdles for regulatory agencies like waiting for "manifest bodily harm" before acting to protect public health.
- [SB 111](#) would mandate recess for children in school from Kindergarten through 5th grade. However, there is a provision in this bill that would allow schools to use exercise as a form of student discipline.