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Clean Air Celebrates and Thanks Governor Hochul for Today's Data Center Executive Order

The Clean Air Coalition of Western New York organizes with fence-line and frontline residents in Erie and Niagara County NY to organize to fight for environmental justice and public health.

We first became engaged in data center site fights with the closure of the former Tonawanda Coke in 2018 and the announcement at that time that the future planned use was a hyperscale data center - from the beginning, residents expressed skepticism and concern about this planned use. They have since grown increasingly vocal in their opposition to a data center at that site, and in favor of renewable energy generation and storage instead.

In parallel to this, cryptocurrency mining data centers in Erie and Niagara Counties began to pop up at area industrial sites, and in 2021 Clean Air began actively supporting data center site fights in our region, starting with the DigiPowerX cryptocurrency data center at the Fortistar gas-fired power plant in North Tonawanda.

We thank Governor Hochul for her action today to sign an Executive Order initiating a 1-year moratorium on all new data centers larger than 50 MW, or of expansions of existing data centers of similar size - this is a bold and innovative action by our Governor, and deserves applause. We especially applaud the inclusion of organized labor provisions within the proposed Community Investment Framework.

We urge that the Department of Public Service, Empire State Development, Department of Environmental Conservation and other named agencies engage with environmental justice organizations and fence-line communities across the state for the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement, the Community Investment Framework, and the Data Center Interconnection Working Group.



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We further urge that, as the New York Grid Acceleration Fund begins to take shape, that investments in publicly owned renewable energy projects and supportive transmission and distribution be strongly considered.

We also urge that local governments not consider this action to supersede local actions, such as developing zoning amendments to fit individual municipal concerns, and also flag that smaller data centers between 10-50MW are not included in the moratorium, so we would urge continuing to pursue local moratoriums to restrict these new developments.

For example, we urge that the Town of Tonawanda continue to pursue the planned hearing on August 3 to initiate a 6-month moratorium, as there are local zoning actions that can still begin to be initiated during this one year pause.

The Governor's actions today are worth celebrating - this is a huge win for communities and grassroots organizers who fight for action to rein in this unregulated industrial sector.

We again thank the Governor, as well as all our members and supporters who have worked tirelessly this year to bring about this action.