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HOUSE BILL NO. 607

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A BILL to direct the Department of Environmental Quality to conduct a study that researches and models a variety of scenarios regarding aggregate air pollution in areas with a large volume of data centers and provide recommendations for future handling of minor air permits for generators and the need for increased air quality monitoring in the Commonwealth; report.

Patron—Laufer

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. *§ 1. That the Department of Environmental Quality (the Department) shall conduct a three-year study to research and model a variety of scenarios regarding aggregate air pollution in areas with a large volume of data centers, as that term is defined in subdivision A 43 of § 58.1-3506 of the Code of Virginia, and provide recommendations for future handling of minor air permits for data center generators and the need for increased air quality monitoring in the Commonwealth. The study shall provide a cumulative assessment of air pollution in such areas as a result of a high number of data center generators previously approved under minor air permits that only considered the net output of each generator. In its study, the Department shall examine the maximum emissions for such generators compared to the baseline of current use for 2025 under the following four scenarios: planned outage events, increased actual outage events due to grid strain, use for demand response, and use for primary power supply until power is available from the grid. The study shall also consider the following: (i) emission levels and pollution output, including consideration of the type of generator, how many generators are operating at once, and the cumulative impact of various scenarios; (ii) a geographic analysis, including an evaluation of proximity impacts, dissipation, and reach of different criteria pollutants on nearby and distant communities; specific consideration of exposure risk to sensitive receptors such as the elderly, schools, daycares, or hospitals; or specific consideration of environmental justice communities including low-income communities, majority-minority communities, and communities already burdened by underlying poor air quality; (iii) a temporal analysis, including consideration of how long generators are operating and the public health impacts of continuous exposure versus short-term exposure, when generators are operating and the average underlying air quality at such time, whether the operation of generators coincides with high ozone days and, if so, the public health impacts and pollution metrics of output with such coincidence, and the necessity of demand response and the underlying air pollution levels at such time; and (iv) the public health impacts of different types of pollution exposure, including consideration of long duration, continuous exposure from sustained use of various types of generators and an evaluation of the different public health impacts from continuous lower level exposure from gas generators operated for primary power versus short-term exposure from diesel generators. The Department shall report its findings and any recommendations to the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources and the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources by October 1, 2029.*

INTRODUCED

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