ITEM 2026-52: SAFEGUARDING CREATION AND COMMUNITY FROM UNSUSTAINABLE DATA CENTER GROWTH

Whereas, the UMC Social Principles (p. 9) declares: "We affirm that all creation belongs to God and is a manifestation of God's goodness and providential care... Rather than treating creation as if it were placed here solely for humanity's use and consumption, we are called to practice responsible stewardship and to live in right relationship with the Creator and with the whole of God's creation;" and

Whereas, the data center industry provides processing for Artificial Intelligence and has quickly overwhelmed social, environmental and economic resources across the country. In Texas the data center industry is expanding rapidly; and

Whereas, the Horizon Texas Annual Conference should call for this currently unregulated industry to abide by sustainable standards; and

Whereas, data centers fueled by fossil fuels pose health risks to the young, the unborn, and the old, (some of which include, but are not limited to pre-term labor, miscarriage, respiratory illnesses, developmental issues, heart attack, stroke, cancer and depression). Data centers, regardless of their fuel source, produce noise, light, and water pollution (all of which carry their own health risks, and

Whereas, the UMC *Book of Resolutions* (p. 52) states: "The public health risks of technological development and waste must be fully researched and openly assessed before new technologies are introduced into the home, the workplace, the community and the environment;" and

Whereas, in Texas, energy needed to power data centers exceeds the current capacity of ERCOT to power them, facilitating the call for new gas power plants which would substantially increase CO2 emissions; and

Whereas, local governments are racing to secure data center contracts. Sound policies are not currently in place, and local ordinances do not yet have the strength to provide adequate fiscal and environmental protections. Communities are currently vulnerable to often-unfulfilled financial revenue and job projections while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest companies on the planet; and

Whereas, communities awaken to sudden approvals of data centers near their homes and neighborhoods, despite zoning ordinances and laws designed to protect residential and community integrity. Nondisclosure agreements leave citizens without any warning that a data center is imminent. The failure to share information erodes trust between citizens and industry and citizens and elected officials; it is therefore

Resolved, That we call upon the Horizon Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, through its Board of Church and Society, its leaders and participating local congregations to:

- Promote policies that uphold the highest level of sustainability for data center development which protect all living creatures, and insure that data centers should be sited away from vulnerable populations, historic sites, schools, daycares, hospitals and protected lands,
- Recommend standards for onsite renewable energy generation, air quality, water containment and reuse, and for zoning of data centers as "heavy industrial,

- Oppose the use of non-disclosure agreements, proprietary data claims, and tactics that deprive the public of information,
- Recommend that public officials must disclose financial contributions and/or conflicts of interest,
- Advocate that data centers, not local citizens, pay for developing their facilities,
- Oppose the use of tax incentives and/or abatements for these facilities,
- Urge lawmakers/regulators to develop, enforce, and obey all environmental planning laws to assure a full and fair evaluation of the threats to the community,
- Encourage our districts and congregations to work across district/county lines to advocate for environmental and human justice, to support sustainability in the data center industry, and establish working relationships with nonprofit ecumenical and environmental advocacy organizations in Texas,
- Equip Texas United Methodists to advocate for sustainable standards and managed growth of the data center industry.

Resolved, That We call upon the Conference Secretary to send this resolution to the Texas Governor, Texas Senators, the Public Utilities Commission, the Lt. Governor, the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, the Railroad Commission, and relevant local and county authorities including but not limited to city councils and planning committees, county commissioners, and water districts. Also, we call upon the Conference Secretary to share it through the Horizon Texas Conference Communications Office, so that our witness on this issue may be known and effective.

Submitted by:

- Rev. Mel Caraway, Caretaker of God's Creation Coordinator
- Rev. Phil Dieke, Chair, Board of Church and Society
- Horizon Texas Conference Board of Church and Society (3/26/26)
- Jennie Birkholz, Deaconess Candidate
- Horizon Texas Conference United Women in Faith

Supporting Information

What Biblical text(s) informed you in the development of this petition?

- Genesis 1-2
- Psalm 24

How does this petition help further the mission of our Annual Conference to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? How does it align with the HTC vision and the five strategic priorities?

- This aligns with the care and healing component of our Mission Statement.

Provide pertinent references set forth in the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline *or the* 2020/2024 Book of Resolutions *that relate to this petition.*

- BOD – Social Principles p.9
- BOR – Public Health p. 52

How does this item differ from the stated stances set forth in the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline *or the* 2020/2024 Book of Resolutions*?*

- This does not conflict with either the BOD or the BOR.

If applied, what action would be required of the Horizon Texas Annual Conference?

There are no financial implications from this resolution.