



Dear Legislators: The future is not AI. Here's why—and what we can do instead.

A policy report by EDRA of MI

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Introduction

Over the last few months, communities across Michigan have been rising up to fight the development of hyperscale AI data centers. Strong, local, self-organized **grassroots opposition has arisen in every neighborhood where these projects are proposed**. Many communities have already put a stop to these deals. [Data Center Watch estimates](#) over **\$64B in data center investment has been blocked in the US in recent years due to grassroots pushback** by local communities.

The issue of AI data centers is, by all evidence and account, an issue which **cuts across all political, socioeconomic, and cultural lines**. These data centers are being opposed in communities which are heavily industrialized, rural agricultural, heavily Republican, heavily Democrat, wealthy, poor, and everywhere in between. Conservatives, liberals, and independents seem to have joined together in agreement on this one issue: AI is no good for Michigan.

We would like you to understand why. We've gathered together the top concerns of Michigan's residents, and we've summarized them here for you, as well as potential policy solutions. As you steer our beautiful state's policies, **we urge you to consider these points, and to facilitate a realistic conversation with your colleagues about what is truly best for Michigan**—not just for the pockets of lobbyists, industrialists, and captured public officials.

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The problems with AI:

Outrageous energy use

We're seeing these hyperscale data centers project massive energy usage, ranging from 200MW to 1.4GW per day. By October 2025, DTE and Consumers Energy developed plans to provide [12.8 gigawatts of power](#) to AI data centers, which is the **equivalent of adding six or seven major cities to Michigan's energy grid in just two or three years**. We literally don't have a way to create this much power—it would require a massive grid and infrastructure buildout, which would destroy thousands of acres of taxpayer and state owned land, and it would hurt residents and local businesses. As industrial clients like data centers get top priority by utility companies, high energy usage will **strain the grid, spike rates for consumers, and cause outages** to residential and commercial districts.

Water destruction & contamination

Residential neighbors to a Meta (Facebook) AI data center [are claiming they "can't drink the water"](#) due to contamination, and they're not alone; Amazon and other data centers are being [linked to an influx of rare cancers](#). Some studies estimate **AI data centers will consume over 1.7 trillion gallons of water per day** worldwide by 2027. The Great Lakes contain over 20% of the world's fresh water reserves—and technocrats seem to believe the best use of those reserves is to drain them to make AI slop and an automated surveillance state.

Scambots, AI slop, and government surveillance

AI bots are [quickly replacing](#) human-created content and human user accounts on the internet. This has not only filled the internet with inane AI slop content; it's also led to the rise of **AI-generated scambots**. Internet scams and identity theft are on the rise, with the **elderly at risk the most**. Meanwhile, AI companies like [Palantir](#) and [OpenAI](#) have been contracted by the US government to collect, store, and analyze the personal data of US citizens. These companies are **openly spying on us**, and they're using consumer-facing AI tools such as ChatGPT to do it.

The bubble will burst

In economics, a "bubble" is when something in the market **costs way more than it's actually worth**. We've seen this happen in Silicon Valley for three decades, as tech companies get sold for more money than they ever end up making. We saw it leading up to the real estate crash of 2008, as NINJA loans were being packaged into portfolios and sold to investors as AAA rated mortgage bonds. And [we're seeing it now](#), as Wall Street and the US government **pour hundreds of billions of dollars** into an industry which is **improving revenue for only 5% of its users**, and which is [eating itself alive](#).

Taxpayer subsidies for AI technocracy

AI data centers are federally subsidized through **the CHIPS act**, passed by the Biden administration and **still alive and well under the Trump administration**. At the state level, they're subsidized by the recently passed **Data Center Tax Break bills (HB 4906 and SB 237)**. Both of these subsidies deny local communities one of the only potential long-term benefits of having data centers as a neighbor: tax revenue. Meanwhile, **corporate subsidies have been [proven](#) not to work** over and over again.



Human job destruction

AI data centers aren't job creators; **they're job killers**. These facilities employ a very small number of people—the average workforce employs only a few dozen people. Meanwhile, Amazon just [replaced 14,000 workers with AI](#), and companies like Salesforce and several airlines have also made significant cuts. This **exposes the argument that these data centers are needed to create job growth to be a complete and utter lie**. Meanwhile, as use of AI in customer service increases, the quality of customer experience is plummeting. United Healthcare is [using AI to automate the denial of its claims](#), which eliminates jobs while ensuring patients face even higher barriers to accessing health care.

AI psychosis and the mental health crisis

There have been [several teenage suicides in the US](#) which have been connected to the use of AI chatbots, and even more instances of murders which have been linked to AI-fueled paranoia. The psychology community has dubbed the **new phenomenon “AI psychosis,”** in which frequent interactions with AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, cause users to lose touch with reality. With companies like Meta attempting to introduce [AI chatbots as an alternative to human interaction](#), the technology **could have very dangerous consequences** for human mental health.

This is your brain on AI

A [recent study](#) by MIT connected **prolonged use of AI with “long-term cognitive harm,”** finding that students who “repeatedly relied on ChatGPT showed weakened neural connectivity, impaired memory recall, and diminished sense of ownership over their own writing.” In other words: using **AI is destroying people's ability to think, remember, and express agency**.

Policy solutions:

We need a new CP3 model for economic development

Healthy economic development takes time and collaboration with all stakeholders—starting with local residents, businesses, and leaders. These AI data center projects are the opposite: they're being forced onto communities with zero engagement, demanding local leaders sign NDAs, bullying public agencies into rubber stamping permits, and lobbying to diminish local zoning rights. There is nothing collaborative about these projects.

What we need are projects which not only involve the community, but which are inspired and initiated by the community itself. **Instead of public-private partnerships (the P3 model), we need citizen-public-private partnerships (a CP3 model)**. Rather than handing out billions to multinational corporations for factories which will be filled with robots and H1B visa workers, our public agencies need to be facilitating local entrepreneurship, community-led projects, and family-owned agriculture.

Strengthen local zoning & environmental regulation

Local zoning and control over development must be protected; development in Michigan needs more local control and involvement, not less. If developers need to thwart local zoning in order to accomplish their goals, then it's clear that their project is not in the community's best interest. We need our legislators to protect us from predatory



development tactics which strip communities and their local elected officials of their rights to self determination. Communities know what they need best—not globalist think tanks and multinational corporations.

Similarly, **environmental regulation must be strengthened, not cut**. Historically, US residents have taken pride in the cleanliness of our factories and our industry, compared to other parts of the world. But this Manufacturing 4.0 policy is allowing heavy industrial development to skip environmental impact studies (EIS) and other key due diligence. These developments need enforcement and stricter environmental regulation—not less.

Re-evaluate climate policy

The climate policy which was written by energy industrialists and paid for by Michigan taxpayers has failed. The state's aggressive policies of paving the way for utility-scale wind, solar, biomass, carbon capture, and BESS **have been of no benefit to the fight against climate change**. What it's done, instead, is hike residential energy rates, destroy farmland and wild habitat, and create demand for a highly toxic mineral supply chain.

Cusping [science is discovering](#) that habitats—such as forests, wetlands, and grasslands—and surface water play a central role in regulating local and global climates. It's also discovering that these habitats, abundant aquifers, and healthy soil are highly effective at sinking carbon. This means that **any honest, scientifically sound effort towards stopping climate change should be centered around the preservation of habitat, soil, and water**.

These preservation efforts would pair very nicely with a policy focus on regenerative agriculture, which restores soil, increases surface water and soil carbon, and reduces agricultural pollution and chemical inputs.

Focus economic development on regenerative agriculture

Youth job surveys, public sentiment, and even [dusty, federally-developed policies](#) all agree on the industry which needs to take the spotlight in Michigan right now: regenerative agriculture. By this, we mean shifting gears from the large-scale, high water and chemical input monoculture commodities farming model, and towards a small to medium-scale, low-input polyculture local and regional farming model. Michigan is abundant in water, good soil, and good conditions for agriculture. Rather than paying high prices for imported food, Michiangders should be feeding ourselves—and the rest of the country, too.

A policy focused on creating a renaissance of regenerative agriculture could:

- spark the expansion of the agricultural and industrial supply chains, **boosting local, regional, and national economic development**
- create **nontoxic, quality local jobs—agricultural jobs** which the youngest generations want to work
- dramatically **increase food security**, lowering costs for consumers, raising profits for local farmers
- **increase the community's resilience** against global instability
- achieve real, scientifically **sound climate action** through the preservation and re-creation of habitats, healthy soil, and abundant watersheds.

