

A STATEMENT TO THE PUBLIC AND OUR ELECTED LEADERS

FROM STEAMFITTERS UA LOCAL 602

To the Communities We Serve and the Leaders Who Represent Us:

Every day, thousands of men and women put on their boots and do the essential work that keeps Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia running. We are the members of Steamfitters UA Local 602, and our work is built into the hospitals, schools, power plants, data centers, grocery stores, laboratories, and public buildings our communities rely on. If you have ever felt air conditioning in a high-rise office building or heat in the dead of winter, our members helped make that possible. When hospitals rely on life-saving medical gases, supermarkets keep food at critical temperatures, pharmaceutical manufacturers protect sterile processes, microchip facilities operate with precision, and power plants generate steam, union steamfitters are there. Our trade reaches into nearly every part of modern life. We do not ask for recognition, but when our livelihoods are threatened, we must take a stand.

For more than three decades, since the early 1990s, our members have built the complex cooling infrastructure that keeps data centers running. Long before “the cloud” or “artificial intelligence” became household terms, Steamfitters Local 602 was building the physical backbone of the global internet economy across Northern Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Data center capacity is modern critical infrastructure. Like power plants, hospitals, and water systems, it supports the day-to-day function of our modern world. Let me be clear about what is at stake: if responsible data center development across our region comes to a halt, several thousand Local 602 members will be out of work—and the impact will extend far beyond our local union. It will ripple across all construction trades, threatening work for thousands of skilled men and women whose families depend on a steady pipeline of projects. That is not a minor policy disagreement; it is a catastrophic economic blow to working-class households across Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Crucially, the unprecedented scale of data center development in our region has been the driving engine behind our growth. In just the past few years, this steady pipeline of work has allowed us to recruit, hire, and train thousands of young men and women as apprentices. These young workers are directly employed building and maintaining these complex data centers, as well as staffing the regional fabrication shops that manufacture the specialized piping and cooling systems essential to data center construction.

Each year, we open the door to this next generation through a five-year pathway that combines full-time, paid on-the-job training with rigorous evening classroom instruction. We do not care what neighborhood or ZIP code someone comes from. We welcome men and women of all backgrounds, races, and creeds. We care whether they are ready to work hard, learn, show up, be part of a team, and meet the standards of the trade. Apprentices emerge as highly skilled journeypersons with strong wages, health and retirement benefits, zero tuition debt, and a lifelong commitment to continuing education, mentorship, and service. That is workforce development in its most practical form—and a direct, proven pathway into the middle class for our region's youth.

Our economic contribution is equally real. Local 602 and roughly 200 signatory contractors support thousands of skilled careers, approximately \$2 billion in annual industry revenue, and approximately \$500 million in state, federal, and local taxes each year. Those dollars support families, small businesses, schools, infrastructure, and public services throughout our region. That reality is why the claim that data centers do not create “permanent jobs” misses the point. Construction work is project-based; a construction career is not. Our members build one project safely, on time, and on budget, then move to the next. And the work does not end when the building

opens. Roughly half of our membership works in construction, building mechanical systems during a project's development, while the other half works in service, maintaining and repairing those systems for the life of the building. Data centers generate man-hours for our members throughout the full life cycle of the facility. The permanence is in a 30- or 40-year skilled career sustained by a continuous pipeline of construction, service, maintenance, and shop fabrication work. These are local careers held by people who live, pay taxes, raise families, volunteer, and spend their earnings in the communities we serve.

Too often, opposition is fueled by material misinformation. We hear, for example, that all data centers consume vast quantities of water from rivers and streams, even though cooling systems vary and many modern facilities use closed-loop systems that recirculate cooling water rather than continuously withdrawing new water. We also hear that these projects do not create lasting or local jobs—a claim that fundamentally misunderstands how construction careers work. Public policy should be based on the actual project and technology proposed, not generalized claims about different facilities built elsewhere. We expect elected and appointed officials to correct material misinformation when it arises—not repeat, amplify, or validate misleading claims. When billions of dollars in investment, substantial public revenues, critical infrastructure, and thousands of working families are at stake, setting the record straight is not optional. It is a basic responsibility of public leadership.

We do not expect our political allies to agree with us on every issue. We value honest dialogue and long-standing relationships. But on this issue, our survival, our members' paychecks, and the future of regional workforce development are on the line. This is an existential moment for Local 602 and the broader building trades. **Therefore, Steamfitters Local 602 is drawing a clear line today:** We will not support, in any way, any candidate, elected or appointed official, policy, directive, regulation, or governmental action that is adverse to responsible data center development in our jurisdiction or works to prevent these projects from moving forward.

We want to build our region's future. We want to power the infrastructure of tomorrow with the safest, highest-skilled labor in the world. We urge our elected leaders to reject political posturing, look directly at the families and young apprentices who depend on these jobs, correct material misinformation when it arises, sit down with us in good faith, and work with us to keep Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. moving forward.

Sincerely,

Sidney Bonilla

Business Manager / Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Steamfitters UA Local 602