



Response to "The rush to build Ohio data centers tells us everything that's wrong with local and state government"

Ohio Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Coalition [OFCHC] appreciates the opportunity to respond to the commentary published in the Ohio Capital Journal on February 19, 2026. The article raises important questions about energy infrastructure, economic development, and community impacts — questions our coalition takes seriously. Energy demand from data centers is substantial and must be addressed responsibly. However, the commentary's characterization of fuel cell emissions lacks important context that we believe is worth clarifying.

Fuel cells generate electricity through an electrochemical process, not combustion. This distinction matters: fuel cells produce dramatically lower air pollutants than conventional generation sources, operate without significant moving parts, and have a near-silent footprint. They are among the most efficient and reliable distributed power technologies available today, with a decades-long track record at hospitals, universities, and industrial facilities across the country — and increasingly, as a way to meet large energy loads without adding strain to the regional grid.

Fuel cell technology is not only a cleaner power-generation solution — it also represents a strategic economic opportunity that Ohio has been cultivating for decades. The state has built one of the most significant fuel cell ecosystems in the country, and that investment is directly relevant to how we power our digital infrastructure going forward.

Over the next decade, the fuel cell sector will play a critical role in several areas of Ohio's economy:

Grid Resilience and Distributed Energy:

Fuel cells can provide reliable on-site generation for critical facilities such as hospitals, data centers, and manufacturing plants, improving resilience while complementing renewable generation.

Advanced Manufacturing Leadership:

Ohio's industrial base already manufactures precision components, advanced materials, and power electronics that are essential to fuel cell technologies.

Energy Innovation and Workforce Development:

Ohio's universities and research institutions are training the engineers and technicians who will design, build, and maintain the next generation of clean energy infrastructure.

It is also important to note that discussions about data centers and energy infrastructure should not frame technological innovation as a zero-sum choice between economic development and environmental responsibility. Ohio's energy transition will require a diverse portfolio of technologies—including renewables, advanced nuclear, battery storage, and hydrogen-based systems—to ensure reliable and affordable power.

Constructive policy discussions should focus on how to responsibly integrate these technologies into the state's energy mix while supporting economic growth and community interests. Broad criticisms that overlook the technical and economic realities of modern energy systems risk undermining informed decision-making.

Ohio Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Coalition

151 Innovation Drive, Elyria - Ohio 44035 Phone: 216-773-0578 www.ofchc.org

The Ohio Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Coalition welcomes thoughtful debate about how Ohio can balance growth in digital infrastructure with environmental stewardship and community priorities. We believe fuel cell technologies are part of that solution—not a problem to be dismissed.

Over the next ten years, Ohio has the opportunity to become a national leader in fuel cell innovation, advanced energy manufacturing, and resilient infrastructure. By continuing to invest in research, workforce development, and responsible deployment of emerging technologies, Ohio can strengthen its economy while building a more sustainable energy future.

We encourage policymakers, journalists, and community stakeholders to engage with industry experts, researchers, and manufacturers to better understand the capabilities and benefits of fuel cell technologies.

Ohio Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Coalition

The Ohio Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Coalition (OFCHC) is a clean energy trade association focused on fuel cell and hydrogen industry growth in the Midwest. We work to advance industry and promote public awareness about the positive role fuel cell and hydrogen technologies can play as an efficient, reliable and environmentally responsible source of energy in a wide variety of applications. We are a member-driven non-profit organization – a united group of industry, academic, and government leaders – and we connect innovators with policymakers to make zero-emission, high-efficiency energy solutions a reality today.