

**SB0878 - Oil and Natural Gas - Hydraulic Fracturing - Authorization**  
**UNFAVORABLE**  
**Lillia Rose, Garrett Countian.**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

I urge you to give SB0878 an unfavorable report as it does not reflect the will of the people of Garrett County.

My name is Lillia Rose, and I am a proud Garrett Countian. born and raised, and someday, God willing, buried and returned to these beautiful 500-million-year-old Appalachian Mountains. But what else is buried in these mountains has, for generations, been deemed more valuable than my ancestors, my health, and the environmental well-being of my community.

These are real communities with real people who must bear the very real environmental consequences of natural resource extraction. I know it's easy to forget about us, peacefully tucked away until you want to visit for our beautiful, pristine nature. But let me remind you: our people live here year-round, and we have to deal with what gets left behind when the drilling stops.

We are no stranger to the reality of natural resource extraction here in my home. In 2023 alone, 1.46 million tons of coal were mined from our county<sup>1</sup>. That might not seem like much at a state level, but to us the communities left behind with the scars of mining and the process of reclamation, it is everything, this is our home. The continued exploitation of our land has left us with abandoned and unreclaimed strip and deep mines in Western Maryland, contaminating local waterways with acid mine drainage, and causing geographic changes like subsidence and landslides<sup>2</sup>. Is it any coincidence that Kitzmiller<sup>3</sup>, Gormanian, and Coney, some of the most heavily extracted areas in the state all face water quality issues<sup>4</sup>?

I am not against resource extraction, I am against reckless, unsustainable development that prioritizes corporate profits over community well-being. I am against eminent domain for private gain. I am against out-of-state corporations pillaging Garrett County under the guise of

<sup>1</sup> *Maryland Department of the environment*. Department of the Environment. (n.d.). <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/mining/pages/bureauofminesannualreports.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> *Maryland Department of the environment*. Department of the Environment. (n.d.-a). <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/mining/Pages/Interesting-Projects.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> King, T. (2024, August 29). *Commissioners send letter to Kitzmiller regarding water system issues*. WV News. [https://www.wvnews.com/garrettrepublican/news/commissioners-send-letter-to-kitzmiller-regarding-water-system-issues/article\\_f873fd04-656d-11ef-9e42-a770c17ea12e.html](https://www.wvnews.com/garrettrepublican/news/commissioners-send-letter-to-kitzmiller-regarding-water-system-issues/article_f873fd04-656d-11ef-9e42-a770c17ea12e.html)

<sup>4</sup> Palmer, R. (n.d.). *Critical Areas In The Potomac River Basin*. Potomac River. [https://www.potomacriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ICP76-4\\_Palmer.pdf](https://www.potomacriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ICP76-4_Palmer.pdf)

"economic return" while leaving us with lower property values, declining wildlife populations, polluted wells, and irreparable damage to our most valuable asset, our natural beauty. Deep Creek Lake, Swallow Falls, and our state parks are not just picturesque tourist attractions; they are the backbone of our economy and our way of life. They are irreplaceable.

This conversation of un-banning fracking in Maryland must also include the reality of the very expensive reclamation process. We must have foresight and learn from the mistakes of our Appalachian neighbors. We must also acknowledge that despite boundaries, Garrett County shares in these environmental risks, as we share the same watershed and geography of West Virginia. West Virginia has been left with 18,000 unplugged abandoned and orphaned oil wells, each posing hazardous threats to communities through methane emissions and groundwater contamination, with costly reclamation efforts falling to the state. Plugging a well and reclamation of fracked sights is no cheap or easy task. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection requested to plug 160 hazardous wells with federal funding, estimating that it would cost them \$20 million at \$125,000 per well. Since receiving the funds and granting two separate bids for plugging, West Virginia has plugged 194 wells, at \$123,620 a piece, totalling \$24 million<sup>5</sup>. The state's responsibility to plug and reclaim orphaned wells and to enforce the plugging of abandoned wells is crucial to both the environment and to curb potential health risks of the community.

Unplugged orphaned wells emit many harmful gasses into the atmosphere such as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, volatile alkanes, hydrogen sulfides, and most importantly, methane. The Department of Interior, in 2021, reported that 295 kilotons of methane emissions were released from abandoned wells in the U.S<sup>6</sup>, equivalent to 8.2 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. The EPA estimates that the average passenger vehicle emits only 4.6 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> a year<sup>7</sup>; therefore if all abandoned wells were plugged it would have the same impact as taking 1,782,608 cars off of the road. These gas emissions do not only impact the atmosphere, they can also contaminate the soil around the well as well as groundwater sources. Why would we willingly subject ourselves to the same fate?

Furthermore, Maryland's geological suitability for oil and gas extraction is questionable, according to the Maryland State Mineral mapping. Despite exploration dating back to 1888, no petroleum has ever been found in the state<sup>8</sup>. Natural gas production peaked in 1959 and has been in decline ever since. Fracking, an expensive and infrastructure-heavy endeavor, poses direct

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<sup>5</sup> [Boettner, Ted. "First Tranche of Federal Orphan Well Funds out the Door." Ohio River Valley Institute, March 1, 2023.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Orphaned-wells-methane-measurement-guidelines-july- .... July 2023.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [EPA, June 2023.](#)

<sup>8</sup> Natural gas.

(n.d.).[http://www.mgs.md.gov/geology/minerals\\_energy\\_resources/natural\\_gas.html#:~:text=No%20petroleum%20has%20been%20found,have%20been%20drilled%20in%20Maryland.](http://www.mgs.md.gov/geology/minerals_energy_resources/natural_gas.html#:~:text=No%20petroleum%20has%20been%20found,have%20been%20drilled%20in%20Maryland.)

risks to communities that rely on well water. Studies from the EPA and Duke University have documented methane migration and heavy metal leaching into groundwater in fracking regions. Cleanup costs are staggering. Dimock, Pennsylvania, saw just 14 households require \$109,000 in methane removal systems, while an underground gas seep in Colorado has cost hundreds of thousands over eight years with no resolution in sight<sup>9</sup>.

The costs of fracking extend far beyond this water contamination, it touches every aspect of a community's well being. Fracking-related air pollution has been linked to increased rates of respiratory illness, eye irritation, and nausea, for example, an estimated \$10 million in public health costs in Arkansas' Fayetteville Shale region in 2008 alone. The environmental impact is equally devastating, with deforestation in Pennsylvania worsening nutrient pollution in the Chesapeake Bay and Wyoming's gas extraction fragmenting mule deer habitats, leading to a 56% population decline in less than a decade<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, the damage to public infrastructure is extensive, each fracking well requires truck traffic equivalent to 3.5 million car trips, contributing to \$265 million in road repairs in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region alone.

There was a reason we banned fracking in 2017. Environmental groups, public health advocates, and researchers warned of the risks fracking posed to air quality, water safety, and public health. Studies by the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins, and the Maryland Department of Health all concluded that fracking could not be done safely<sup>11</sup>. We must not reverse this decision.

When I was a child, I played in creeks that were orange with acid mine runoff. I refuse to stand by and let the next generation experience the same.

For once, I ask you to give my people the peace of mind that we are worth more than the resources under our feet. Give SB0878 an unfavorable report.

God bless my Mountain Mama, the Appalachian Mountains, and God bless Garrett County.

Lillia Rose  
Proud Garrett Countian

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<sup>9</sup> The costs of fracking. (n.d.).

<https://environmentamerica.org/minnesota/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/The-Costs-of-Fracking-vMN.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> The costs of fracking. (n.d.).

<https://environmentamerica.org/minnesota/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/The-Costs-of-Fracking-vMN.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Public Health Advocates Celebrate Maryland Fracking Ban. (n.d.-a).

<https://sph.umd.edu/news/public-health-advocates-celebrate-maryland-fracking-ban>