

Subject: STRONGLY OPPOSE SB0878

Dear Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Members,

My name is Winston Ernst and I am writing to the Committee today to voice my strong opposition to SB0878 Oil and Natural Gas - Hydraulic Fracturing - Authorization. I am asking you to vote no on this bill.

Born and raised in Maryland, I have come to appreciate this great state for a variety of reasons. Like many fellow Marylanders I am especially fond of our clean water and fresh air, especially in Mountain Maryland. My love of this area began when I enrolled at Garrett College in the Winter of 2014. My immediate connection to the wild and scenic rivers and mountains of this region inspired me to become involved in the anti-fracking movement. I'll remind you that Fracking was largely opposed by Maryland residents across the state, especially in Garrett County and that we banned it in the state of Maryland in 2017. It's been 8 years and people's perspectives have not changed on this issue.

Since graduating from Garrett College and Frostburg State University in 2019, I have built a career around education and outdoor recreation. I frequently lead 5 - 12 day expeditions canoeing on the Potomac and Youghiogheny Rivers and backpacking through Savage River State Forest, changing students' lives through challenge and discovery. Ecotourism has long been a booming industry in this part of Maryland, and will only continue to be a special attraction for future generations as more of our planet around us is developed or destroyed by human beings. Additionally, Fracking would require millions of gallons of water to be removed from local water sources. This is not possible, especially considering where water levels were at last Summer and Fall 2024. Water is the most precious resource in Western Maryland and we cannot afford pulling it and contaminating it for Fracking use. Think of all the people who rely on water for recreational boating on lakes, fishing in local rivers and streams, and most importantly for simply drinking fresh water. We must continue to make decisions with a long term vision in mind. The short term profits and risks associated with Hydraulic Fracking is not worth it.

I am shocked and outraged that SB0878 was led without public knowledge and an opportunity for us to express our concerns and ask questions. I do not want to see Garrett County, where the Marcellus Shale intersects with Maryland, fracked to the detriment of our economic, environmental, and public health. Specifically, I oppose fracking because of the impacts to environmental and human health through water contamination and air pollution. Some human health risks that can result from Fracking include increased risk of cancer, birth defects, respiratory and neurological problems, while environmental risks include increased levels of harmful chemicals in water near fracking sites, smog-forming ozone pollutants, noise pollution, habitat degradation, and drinking water contamination. These aren't my only concerns.

While Maryland's budget and energy crisis are complicated and require bold solutions, allowing hydraulic fracturing anywhere in Maryland does not help either situation. In the end and long-term, fracking will cost the state more than it generates in terms of costs to local

governments, lost income and the resulting loss in taxes, a more significant cost required to attend to public and environmental health consequences, and future reclamation and clean-up. Regarding our 2023 clean energy goals, it cannot be over-emphasized that while some consider fracked gas power generation to be clean burning, fracking the gas is historically proven to be the opposite and a cause of environmental destruction.

Fracking will drain our resources and ultimately contradict the state's future goals and path to economic, environmental, and public health, most severely in Garrett County. I urge you to vote no on SB0878. Thank you.

In Service,  
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