

Dear Senators Brian Feldman, Cheryl Kagan, Dalya Attar, Malcolm Augustine, Benjamin Brooks, Marybeth Carozza. Jason Gallion, Katiefry Hester, Bryan Simonaire, Mary Washington, and Ron Watson,

When Maryland banned fracking in 2017, the negative impacts of fracking were already well known, but since then scientists in other states have continued to provide incontrovertible evidence of the negative health, environmental, and economic effects of fracking, especially in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, the two bordering states that share the Marcellus Shale and which are heavily fracked. We can easily envision the same or worse results in Maryland; and we can conclude confidently that you made the correct decision in 2017.

First on HEALTH: A recent report by the Pennsylvania Department of Health links fracking to worse asthma attacks, lower infant birth weights, and drastically higher rates of childhood lymphoma, a rare type of cancer. In New York, a report of Concerned Health Professionals found 2,239 peer-reviewed studies that found evidence of adverse health effects. As the report states, fracking is characterized by “stomach-churning smells, mysterious rashes, never-ending headaches and nausea faucets that produce brown, sludgy water, and water that [erupts into flames](#) at the touch of a lighter.”

A principle danger comes from the toxic chemicals used in the fracking process. The chemicals are needed to cause the underground explosion – that is, the fracturing of rock – that releases the natural gas. No amount of engineering or smooth public relations can alter this basic fact.

None of this is healthy.

Second on the ENVIRONMENT:

Mountain Maryland’s bedrock is made up of extensive karst formations – imagine it as rock with osteoporosis. This makes for great aquifers, but because the pockets and fissures are all interconnected, karst is also susceptible to contamination. Fracking chemicals seep well beyond the intended gas harvesting area, resulting in damage to aquifers, drinking water, livestock, wildlands, and animal habitat.

The billions of gallons of water used in fracking is not reusable; and although water seems to be an abundant resource, it is not inexhaustible. Further, the disposal of used fracked water is a major concern. Injection wells cause more problems, and safeguards are sparse and unreliable.

Third on the ECONOMY:

Since the start of the fracking boom, Southwestern Pennsylvania has been a hotspot for gas. Fracking companies flooded in, promising jobs, tax revenue, and community investment. The oil and gas industry promised 125,000 permanent, high-paying fracking-related jobs in Pennsylvania; the actual total is 12,500, or just 10% of the promises. Meanwhile, heavy truck traffic has been tearing up the roads in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Tourism is the biggest economic force in Garrett County, accounting for 60% of the county's tax revenues. People from Baltimore, DC, and Pittsburgh come here to enjoy our peaceful mountains, clean air, and beautiful state parks and to escape heavy industry and congestion. Fracking would jeopardize all that.

Will this cost us more money than the revenue we might gain? And will the economic benefits accrue to the Garrett County community or only to a select few landowners and investors?

Finally, the State of Maryland, meaning ultimately the taxpayers, will have to deal with the economic fallout from fracking: repairing roads, cleaning up from toxic spills and accidental explosions, and reclamation of drilling sites after gas extraction is over and the drilling companies have all gone bankrupt. We, the taxpayers, will be left holding the bag; and if you permit it, you, the legislators, will be responsible for facilitating this tragedy.

There is simply no way that fracking is worth the risk to our health, environment, or economy.

Please kill the bill.

--Bob and Mary Helen Spear, Swanton, Garrett County, Maryland