

To: Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair

Date: March 4, 2025

Re: Senate Bill 878 Testimony

My name is Gary Sines. My wife and I are lifelong Marylanders, landowners and full-time residents of Garrett County since 2005. My grandfather, Silas Sines, was born and resided in Garrett County until accepting a position in 1927 as superintendent of the state tree nursery, then in College Park. The Sines family roots are closely entwined with the history of forestry in Maryland.

We are strongly opposed to this bill, which is certain to adversely and disproportionately impact the quality of life in Garrett & Allegheny counties, the only Maryland counties positioned above the massive Marcellus Shale formation, although the smaller Taylorsville Shale formation stretches beneath Annapolis, Waldorf and La Plata in southern Maryland.

My testimony will not attempt to recount the host of reasons why the ban on fracking in Maryland should remain in effect. I expect many of our neighbors and fellow Marylanders that we marched with in Annapolis in 2017 will submit detailed and scientific testimony (yet again) detailing the many reasons this bill must be defeated. But I do feel compelled to note that the reasons for keeping the fracking ban in place are not solely focused on the environmental impact. There are arguably just as many economic reasons not to open the door to the fracking industry in Garrett County.

The fact is, nothing has changed in this industry or practice that makes fracking any more palatable or less dangerous than it was when the legislature banned it in 2017. Only our so-called representatives in the General Assembly have changed. Senator Mike McKay, who has never lived in Garrett County and was elected in a partisan race to fill Senator Edwards' vacant seat in 2022, is co-sponsoring this bill. He'll no doubt allege that his constituents are in favor of fracking his district, when in fact most Garrett Countians that have taken the time to research the pros and cons of hydraulic fracturing are adamantly opposed to it.

Given the above comments, one might ask why I'm concerned enough to submit testimony for this bill hearing. After all, our republican governor in 2017 even saw fit to do the right thing by electing not to veto the fracking ban bill after weighing all the data. And with Governor Moore now in office, we're hopeful that this bill doesn't make it out of committee.

That said, my nagging fear is that the solidly democratic Education, Energy and the Environment Committee, which has the power to easily quash this baseless bill in its infancy, might instead consider allowing it to move forward, perhaps in the spirit of compromise or reaching across the aisle. My wife doesn't share my fears or skepticism. I'm admittedly the bigger worrier, so my worst nightmare is that the Committee could allow a diluted bill to move forward that only permits fracking in the westernmost two counties of Maryland.

We beg the Committee members to oppose this proposed legislation without edits or exceptions, to ensure that the ban on fracking that the people of Garrett County worked so hard to enact just 8 years ago remains in place. I'm convinced that if a similar proceeding were taking place in a republican controlled state house, and democrats were requesting concessions, the response would be a resounding no.

And lastly, we beg you not to underestimate the importance of this bill when deciding its fate. Unlike many laws that can be walked back in subsequent sessions if the resulting impact of the legislation doesn't play out as expected, there's no putting the fracking genie back in the bottle. A single natural gas well utilizing hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling that sprawls underground from the well head like spokes on a wagon wheel can contaminate aquifers that surrounding water wells draw potable water from. Water wells on surrounding properties that never authorized drilling. Water wells like ours, and most Garrett County residents that rely on well water for their lives. *This* is actually my worst nightmare, and my wife's too.

Thank you for providing the means to submit testimony on this bill that impacts quality of life in Garrett & Allegheny Counties, and for giving it your serious consideration.

Respectfully,

Gary & Deborah Sines
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