

Subject: Strongly Oppose SB0878

To Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Members –

We, Joan and Jeff Lyon, are full-time Garrett County residents. The purpose of our letter is to express vehement opposition to *SB0878 Oil and Natural Gas – Hydraulic Fracturing – Authorization*. Please, vote NO on this bill!

In 2005, after military/Federal careers as health professionals, with assignments across the United States, as well as in Asia, Southeast Asia and Europe, we settled in Garrett County to “live amongst the trees and nature, not people and pollution.” Similarly, most of our neighbors and friends chose to live in Garrett County for its peace, solitude and relatively clean air and water.

In recent years, the majority of Western Marylanders made it clear that we do not want fracking here! In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly passed a bill to ban fracking, which Governor Larry Hogan signed into law. We are extremely angry to learn that our recently elected representative sponsored a bill to overturn that law without allowing his constituents to weigh in. Apparently, Mr. McKay, and SB0878’s other sponsors, are trying to sneak this bill through the General Assembly without our knowledge. Their reasoning is to help reduce Maryland’s budget deficit.

Marcellus Shale Fracking would have a range of negative impacts on Garrett County, including our economic viability, our natural environment, and most importantly the health of our citizens – both human and animal. Numerous studies and reports have documented the adverse health consequences for people living near gas wells, especially children. A 2022 study published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* found that children between the ages of two and seven living near gas wells in four heavily fracked counties of southwestern Pennsylvania are two to three times more likely to be diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common kind of childhood leukemia, than children who do not live near gas development. <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP11092>

Another study published that same year in *Nature Energy* found an increased risk of early death among elderly people living near or downwind of UOGD. The study, which examined more than 15 million Medicare beneficiaries living in all major U.S. gas development regions between 2001 and 2015, determined people’s exposure level to fracking-related air pollutants based on whether they were living close to a gas well or downwind from it, and then adjusted for social, environmental, and demographic factors. Subjects who lived closest to wells had a 2.5 percent higher mortality risk than those who didn’t live close to wells, and that those who lived close to wells and also downwind had a higher risk of early death than those who lived upwind. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9004666/pdf/nihms-1788212.pdf>

A newly published (Jan 2025) Canadian study in the *International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health* found that pregnant women living near both conventional and

unconventional oil and gas production are a risk of exposure to harmful levels of volatile chemicals such as decamethylcyclopentasiloxane, chloroform, decanal and acetone. These chemicals are known to have a negative impact on maternal health and birth outcomes.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1438463924001433?via%3Dihub>

We have personally witnessed and experienced fracking's fallout on friends who live near fracked areas in West Virginia and Pennsylvania. This industry's business model involves constant heavy truck/vehicle traffic, which negatively impacts the air quality around and inside homes all along their routes. The amount of dust generated, especially during dry summer months, covers everything and makes it very difficult to breathe. This dust, defined as 'fracking fine's, presents its own chemical hazard. Fracking fines primarily consist of silica dust (the main component of frac sand), which can cause respiratory illnesses like silicosis when inhaled, along with potential traces of various chemicals from the fracking fluid. Depending on the specific mixture used, this can include petroleum distillates (containing benzene, toluene, and xylene), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), heavy metals (like barium and strontium), as well as radioactive elements, depending on the geological formation being fracked. All of these chemicals pose health risks, if inhaled or ingested. In 2020, the journal *Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology* published a Special Issue, Volume 406, 1 November 2020, 115242, titled *Biological effects of inhaled hydraulic fracturing sand dust* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/special-issue/10FLPRHDN25>. It extensively delineates the health hazards to humans and animals exposed to fracking dust.

These are but a few of the many examples of the undesirable impact of the hydraulic fracturing industry. Each of these studies contains references that provide a comprehensive list of adverse health outcomes.

Maryland's budget and energy crisis are real and require bold solutions. However, we firmly believe that in the long-term, allowing hydraulic fracturing would cost my County and our State far more dollars than it would generate. Fracking would drain our fiscal and environmental resources and jeopardize the health of Maryland's future – especially its children.

We strongly urge you to vote no on SB0878!

Sincerely,

Joan Lyon and Jeff Lyon
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