



## **Subject: STRONGLY OPPOSE SB0878**

Dear Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I'm writing as the founding president and Communications Director of Engage Mountain Maryland (EMM). The nonprofit launched in 2015 and was incorporated in February 2016 to encourage Western Maryland citizens to act on important state and local issues.

Hydraulic Fracturing, or "fracking," remains a contentious topic. For my years as EMM's president and charged with communications, I spent no less than two hours a day, sometimes entire days, compiling data, reviewing studies, crafting surveys, writing letters, and sharing the organization's work with the community at large via email subscriptions, social media, and a dedicated domain, [engagemmd.org](http://engagemmd.org). I became one of many volunteers fully invested in the fight. Our organization quickly became a trusted source for vetted information on fracking, placing our diligent work in the gas and oil industry's crosshairs. The countless hours devoted to passing a fracking ban compromised my professional career and income. That sacrifice should not be necessary to protect where I live from reckless ideologies.

As president, I spoke to hundreds of people in person and online, consoling those who feared their towns, as they knew them, would become industrialized, their health placed in jeopardy, their property values diminished, water sources drained dry, their environments ravaged and polluted, or their elected officials owned by the gas industry.

Additionally, I informed landowners of their legal risks before entering into a binding mineral rights lease agreement that makes them a liable drilling business partner. I spoke to many Maryland legislators eager to get up to speed on the issue, educating them on the dangers of natural gas development while echoing the countless concerns of my fellow Garrett County residents.

What I resent most about SB0878 is that it disregards the years of study, the dedication of individuals and nonprofits like EMM, MDE's staff who toiled through drafting regulations that the AELR committee never adopted, and EEE Committee members who patiently listened to over nine hours of ban legislation testimony. That culmination of arguments against fracking was just the tip of the iceberg. The issue was so contentious in Garrett County that it splintered families and long-time friendships, planted seeds of mistrust in government, fostered partisan wars, and launched social media mayhem with insults, threats, in-fighting, back-biting, and targeted humiliation. Gas industry trolls infiltrated meetings, intimidated social account holders, and manipulated community members under pretenses. Fracking destroys everything in its path, and that is all before a single well is drilled. If that's the carnage it creates before drilling begins, the destruction from industrialization is unfathomable. Fracking is an industry that Marylanders should never consider.

The weight and breadth of the fracking debate were unprecedented. Yet, the outcome was affirming! Maryland became the first state in the union to adopt a legislative ban on fracking, and shortly after, Governor Hogan endorsed the General Assembly's decision by saying about fracking, "It's not worth the risk."

Health risks are numerous and include low infant birth weights, childhood leukemia, asthma, and chronic nose bleeds as if that's not enough to end the conversation. Garrett County's tourism economy, which generates over 60 percent of the county's tax budget, would certainly crumble, and early estimates showed a water demand of 5.8 billion gallons required to drill a projected 438 wells by 2025. The numbers are staggering. No plans addressed how or where to discard the toxic wastewater or the radioactive solids extracted from drilling. Maryland would be stuck with a financial burden of waste management and oversight just as it is with the multi-million-dollar price tag of acid mine drainage remediation.

To propose and sponsor a basic piece of junk legislation undermines the behemoth collection of work by previous representatives, some of whom still serve in the General Assembly, and is an abomination of trust in Maryland's government. The existing fracking ban places the health and well-being of Maryland's people, economy, and environment first, as it should. We have already traveled this road to discover the only justifiable destination for the state's people is a ban on fracking.

I am insulted by and strongly oppose SB0878 for the above reasons and hope this committee will reject its content and intent. The bill's sponsors are speaking out of turn and do not represent the views of Garrett County, which would be ground zero for fracking. A sobering truth: In 2021, one of this bill's sponsors joined a succession request asking Garrett County to become part of West Virginia, a shameful disloyalty to the state he represents. Touted as humorous political theater, Garrett County residents were not amused.

After seven years of enjoying ban protection and witnessing a community that has finally healed, these sponsors are woefully out of step with the Maryland General Assembly, the will of the people, and environmental protection groups who did the heavy lifting to protect the state's citizens and communities. Maryland's energy needs should be forward-thinking rather than lazily relying on outmoded, dangerous, and destructive extraction techniques. This ban deserves to be permanent, without question, rather than a perennial topic that wastes everyone's time and valuable energy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Stutzman", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Stutzman  
EMM Co-Founder and Communications Director

*Detailed but digestible information about fracking can be found on the EMM website should you require additional evidence of its risks. [CLICK HERE](#)*