

## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON SB878**

**DATE:** 2/27/2025

**TO:** Maryland State Senate Education, Energy, and Environmental Committee Members

**FROM:** Judy A. Carbone, Resident of Swanton, Garrett County, MD  
Founding and Past Board Member of Engage Mountain Maryland

**RE:** **STRONG OPPOSITION TO SB878** - Oil and Natural Gas - Hydraulic Fracturing - Authorization

My name is Judy Carbone, and I am a citizen of Garrett County and have been for over 25 years. My husband Ken and I moved to Garrett County from Northern Virginia for so many reasons and have built a life here in our careers and in service to our community. Both of us chose to live here when we could have gone anywhere else. Both of us have lived here longer than anywhere else we have ever lived. Both of us have invested our time, resources, heart, and soul into this community we love and call home. And both of us are convinced without a doubt that fracking would put our community in grave danger.

Just to clarify, when I use the term “fracking”, I am referring to High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing with Horizontal Drilling and all of its stages and support structures.

As a founding board member of Engage Mountain Maryland in 2015, I was very active in the fight against fracking in the years leading to the fracking ban legislation in 2017. We worked tirelessly to make sure fracking didn’t come to Garrett County, which would have been ground zero for the fracking industry in Maryland. It would have come to us to the detriment of our economic, public, environmental, and social health. The surety of these disastrous effects were proven to us by the citizens of devastated fracked communities we visited in West Virginia and Pennsylvania and by the extensive published research at the time that we gathered. Nothing has changed in the years since 2017 that indicates fracking would be any safer for us now than it was then.

I sincerely hope that our elected officials in the Maryland General Assembly have not been perpetuating the falsehoods some legislators had back in 2017 during the fracking ban hearings. Then, it was falsely asserted that the citizens of Mountain Maryland wanted to see fracking in our communities. For example, while being interviewed on WCBC in 2017, Delegates from Garrett County and Allegany County stated a falsehood that they had repeatedly directed to the public, individual constituents, and fellow legislators in Annapolis. They claimed that the majority of voters in Mountain Maryland supported high volume hydraulic fracturing and

wanted it in their communities. In 2017, we collected ample evidence demonstrating that was blatantly false. Please allow me to share some of it now.

A Cumberland Times News online poll showed that 66% of respondents were opposed to fracking. In 2012, a Mountain Ridge AP Environmental Science class survey demonstrated that, before a class presentation on fracking, 49% felt they didn't know enough to form an opinion, but of those who did, 81% supported a moratorium; after the class presentation, 97% felt that they had enough information to form an opinion, and of those, 92% supported a fracking moratorium. In 2013, an Opinion Works poll of Western Marylanders showed 76% believed significant scientific studies needed to be conducted before fracking was allowed.

In 2015, an email survey of Garrett County Chamber of Commerce members showed that of those with an opinion, 66% thought their business would be harmed by fracking. A poll of the Greater Oakland Business Association members showed that 75% were against fracking. Also, that year, 150+ businesses signed a letter supporting a moratorium disallowing fracking for 8-years, giving time for additional public and environmental health studies.

In 2015, at a public showing in Garrett County of the documentary by Michael Wicklein entitled "Fracking Western Maryland?", which was widely advertised to the public as being free and as trying to show multiple sides of the question in the title, Engage Mountain Maryland distributed surveys to those who attended – until we ran out of the survey tool. It asked the same three questions in a pre-movie and post-movie assessment. The results were as follows:

- Before the movie, 70% reported they understood the process and effects of fracking. After the movie, this jumped to 83%.
- Before the movie, 84% reported they DO NOT want fracking to come to Western Maryland. This number remained at 84% after the movie.
- Before the movie, 71% reported they DO NOT feel that their elected representatives speak for them on the issue of fracking. After the movie, this number jumped to 88%.

Finally, of the hundreds of Letters to the Editor in The Republican Newspaper (Garrett County) before the fracking ban was instituted, well over 90% were against fracking in Mountain Maryland.

How did the Delegates then justify their false assertion? They claimed they supported fracking during their campaigns and won by a majority and, therefore, assumed that the majority supports fracking, too. This was grossly misleading at best. Not every voter in Western Maryland voted back then on the sole issue of fracking. Decisions on which candidate to vote for are more complicated, including

party affiliation and the fact that Delegate representing Garrett County in the election before the ban ran unopposed. There was no other choice!

I wish we had updated data to share with you today, but truth be told, we were blindsided by the filing of this bill. We thought that we had done our jobs back in 2017 to prove that hydraulic fracturing was not safe in any regard, and that should a bill repealing the fracking ban be submitted it would come with the same level of study, diligence, and planning that fracking in Maryland underwent in 2017. Our senator in D-1, Senator McKay, did not give notice to his constituents that this bill to repeal the fracking ban had been filed nor that he was co-sponsoring this bill, so we have known about SB878 for only a few weeks. Anecdotal information available to us shows that as with the research and data on the threats of fracking to our economic, public, environmental, and social health, the public opinion on shows has not changed since 2017.

The Mountain Maryland majority, especially the citizens of Garrett County, still clearly do NOT support fracking. I ask you sincerely to vote in opposition to SB878 to repeal the Maryland ban on hydraulic fracturing.

Thank you.