



Excellent care close to home

Please be informed that as the leader of Garrett County Memorial Hospital, I raise concerns about lifting the moratorium on Unconventional Natural Gas Development (UNGD), otherwise referred to as hydraulic fracking. The concerns I raise center around the fact that Garrett is identified as a Medically Underserved Area (MUA) as well as a Health Provider Shortage Area (HPSA). The County of Garrett has a medically underserved population that is particularly vulnerable in that the mortality rate for preventable cancers is already high. The mortality rate for breast and colorectal cancer is 25% higher than the rest of the nation and 15% higher for prostate cancer.

In seven out of eight broad categories of UNGDP associated hazards, the MIAEH research team found there would be a high or moderately high likelihood of negative public health impacts from UNGDP, including local air quality, substance abuse, harm to water quality, excessive noise, along with cumulative effects, not to mention that the chemicals used in hydrofracking are known carcinogens. It is incumbent upon this industry to approach the community with transparent information about the processes and chemicals used in such processes.

The information available, along with the regulatory surveillance structure has insufficient capacity to accommodate the development of UNGD in Maryland. As a public health leader in the community, it is not clear what the long term effects would be to public health. Furthermore, I stand firm that Maryland would benefit by waiting until the industry proves how to do this safely and with improved technology in such a way that there is not unmitigated risk placed upon the community.

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