



**National
Nurses
United**

The National Voice for Direct-Care RNs

Washington DC
888 16th Street NW
Suite 640
Washington DC 20006
phone: 800-287-5021
fax: 202-974-8303

Oakland
2000 Franklin Street
Oakland CA 94612
phone: 800-287-5021
fax: 510-663-2771

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley,

We, the undersigned local, state and national organizations, urge you to protect the health of Maryland residents and demonstrate responsible national leadership by rejecting fracking. New scientific evidence, including the recently released study, "Potential Public Health Impacts of Natural Gas Development and Production," clarifies how shale gas extraction via hydraulic fracturing (fracking) would put the public health and wellbeing of Marylanders at risk.

When you announced the study three years ago, your laudable promise was to move forward with fracking only if it could be accomplished "without unacceptable risks of adverse impacts to public health, safety, the environment and natural resources." Since then, a compelling body of science has emerged that shows this standard cannot be met.

The recently released public health study – commissioned by the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and conducted by the Maryland School of Public Health – found that fracking would pose significant impacts to public health in Maryland. In seven of eight research areas – including air quality, worker health, noise and crime, water quality and cumulative effects – the research team found a high or moderately high likelihood of negative public health impacts.

Further, the study shows that fracking would disproportionately affect vulnerable segments of the population and that most regulations would not minimize risks. Notably, researchers determined that well setback distances would not reduce exposure to negative health impacts in six of the eight research areas. Finally, they noted the unmanageable nature of these impacts and the lack of time and resources to conduct a full health impact assessment for all of Maryland.

They are not alone in these findings. Numerous new studies by leading scientists and public health researchers have uncovered serious risks from fracking. For example, an exhaustive 292-page Council of Canadian Academies report published this summer concludes that fracking is, "not demonstrated to be safe under any current regulatory framework" with "environmental impacts not clearly understood." In deciding to halt fracking, the German Federal Environmental Agency has similarly concluded, "As long as risks inherent in this technology cannot be predicted with certainty and thus controlled, there should be no fracking." These conclusions have been echoed in peer-reviewed studies in many U.S. journals, complemented by hundreds of important recent findings and peer-reviewed studies demonstrating significant risks and harms of fracking.(1)

OCT 09 2014

That's the bottom line: the science – which is quickly revealing new, and often worse, harms of fracking – clearly shows that no regulatory framework can protect public health, water and other important resources from the negative impacts of fracking.

It is not surprising that recommendations of the Maryland study, which suggest strategies for addressing these health impacts should you approve fracking, focus on how to monitor toxic exposures rather than prevent them. We remind you that detection is not prevention, and the mere presence of air monitors and publicly available lists of fracking chemicals do not, by themselves, protect children, pregnant women, the elderly, or any Maryland resident, from harm. Moving forward with fracking under these conditions, in which risks are measured but not eliminated, is tantamount to enrolling citizens as nonconsenting subjects in a *de facto* public health experiment.

We are also mindful that the Maryland study, while addressing many salient areas of concern in the scientific literature, is not exhaustive. Most strikingly, the study focuses solely on western Maryland even though a much greater area of the state would be targeted for fracking. As such, many risks specific to particular geography, geology, demographics and other factors have not been examined. Additionally, some relevant impacts—risks stemming from flooding and the fate of toxic wastewater—were not addressed at all. Nor did the scope of the study include possible public health issues in upstream communities, such as those located near silica frac sand mining and processing operations. (Silica dust is a proven cause of both lung cancer and silicosis.) The Maryland study does not capture the evidence for dangerous levels of benzene in the urine of gas field workers nor the finding of a higher prevalence of self-reported respiratory and skin problems among people living near gas wells; these results were published after the Maryland study was released.

In short, the Maryland study provides more than sufficient imperative to say no to fracking in Maryland on the basis of the negative health impacts it predicts. On the grounds that the study likely underestimates these risks due to limitations of scope and time, the justification and imperative for rejecting fracking is even greater. Hence, your mandate to determine whether fracking could be done without harm to public health has been answered: it cannot.

Now we urge you to take a decisive stance for the people of Maryland, in line with the science, by saying no to fracking. Instead, protect Maryland's important natural resources and set the stage for greater investment in renewable energy, the power of the 21st century. The eyes of the nation are watching, imploring you to protect public health and set a shining example for the rest of the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Burger". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Sincerely," text.