



February 20, 2014

## Let's Protect America's Health from Fracking

Dear President Obama,

**As doctors, nurses, researchers and other health and public health professionals, we are deeply concerned about high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) and its growing threats to public health and the environment.** Fracking operations (i.e., the full cycle of extraction operations, not solely the fracturing technique) inject complex mixes of toxic chemicals deep underground; generate millions of gallons of wastewater that is often laced with radioactive, cancer- and other disease-causing toxicants; release toxic chemicals into the air we breathe, and contribute significantly to climate change. Each of these threats increasingly takes its toll, including:

- Fracking operations have contaminated drinking water sources from Pennsylvania to New Mexico. Leaks and spills of fracturing fluid – which often contain known carcinogens (e.g. benzene) and endocrine-disrupting chemicals – have polluted rivers and streams. Other contaminants have flowed into residential wells. And fracking wastewater – often containing heavy metals (e.g. lead, arsenic) and radioactive materials (e.g. radon, uranium) – has leached from hundreds of waste pits into groundwater.
- Air contaminants released from fracking operations include volatile organic compounds (VOCs); some are carcinogenic, and some damage the liver, kidneys and central nervous system. Researchers at the University of Colorado School of Public Health found that people living within a half-mile of gas fracking wells had a higher excess lifetime risk of developing cancer than people living farther away.
- There are a growing number of documented cases of individuals suffering acute and chronic health effects while living near fracking operations – including nausea, rashes, dizziness, headaches and nose bleeds. Physicians reviewing medical records in Pennsylvania have called these illnesses “the tip of the iceberg” of fracking impacts on health; and

- Fracking operations release significant volumes of global warming pollution. Methane, which scientists now say is 86 times more potent than carbon as a greenhouse gas over 20 years, is released at oil and gas fracking wells, and also during the processing, transmission, and distribution of gas. Global warming presents a major threat to human health via heat waves, extreme weather events, flooding, water contamination, sea level rise, expansion of insect-borne diseases, worsening air quality, crop damage, and social instability and conflict.

Given this toll of damage, the prudent and precautionary response would be to stop fracking. Instead, the oil and gas industry is seeking to expand fracking at a frenzied pace, even into areas that provide drinking water for millions of Americans.

**In light of this, we urge you to take two immediate steps to protect families and communities on the frontlines of fracking:** First, call for closing the loopholes that exempt fracking from key provisions of our nation's bedrock environmental and public health laws, including the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and hazardous waste laws. Second, heed the recommendation of your administration's fracking advisory committee and declare sensitive areas – including places that provide drinking water for millions of Americans – as "off-limits" to fracking.

Left unchecked, high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing could soon emerge as one of the greatest environmental health threats we have faced in a generation. We urge you to take action now.

Sincerely,

Heba Abolaban  
MD/MPH Student, Northeastern University

Rohitashua Agrawal  
MPH, Boston University

Lola-Ade Akintobi  
HIV Program Coordinator, ABCD Inc.

Arlene Ash  
Ph.D., MS, UMass Medical School

Ania Barbosa  
MD, MPH, South Shore Medical Center

Toby Beckelman  
MPH/MS Nutrition Candidate, Tufts University

Winnie Bell  
public health and nutrition

Richard Bird  
MD MPH, Uphams Corner Health Center

Marx Bowens  
neurological surgery

Charlotte Butler  
MSN, PhD

Nancy Butters  
MD

Cassandra Carlson  
RN, UMass Medical School

Alen Cavs  
pharmacy student

Lisa Chan  
RN

Valerie Clark  
Newton Wellesley Hospital

Christine Curry  
MD, PhD, Boston Medical Center

Jindong Ding  
MPH, Harvard School of Public Health

William Donovan  
Pre-med student

Sam Donovan  
MSPH

Sheila Dooley  
nurse

Stephanie Doyle  
Project Director, MS, Boston Public Health Commission

Jeannette Duhamel  
MSW

Nicole Eckert  
PhD, Tufts Medical Center

Barbara Estbrook  
UMass Medical School, CHES

Paul Ezust  
PhD

Diane S. Ferguson  
RN

Gay Ferguson  
Occupational Health Nurse

Michael Fiore  
MS, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

Patricia Fitzgerald  
Boston Children's Hospital, Patient Safety & Quality Project Manager

Jane Fitzsimmons  
Reliant Medical Group

Lisa Freeman  
PhD, DVM, DACVN, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tuft's University

Yvonne Fuertes  
nurse (retired)

Bizu Gelaye  
Program Director, PhD MPH, Harvard School of Public Health

Reann Gibson  
Research Associate, Institute for Community Health

Theresa Glenn  
MPH, CHNA

Michael Gordon  
Graduate Research Assistant, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Bonnie Gorman  
RN

Gregg Greenough  
Harvard School of Public Health

James Griffin  
MD, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

Leslye Heilig  
MD

Margaret Hornick  
PhD

Inyanz Ising  
MD

Gergana Koleva  
M. Sc., MA, Masters of Science Candidate, Harvard School of Public Health

Jillian Leikovsteen  
MT

Judy Margo  
Project Manager, Boston University School of Public Health

Ethan Masloop  
MPH

Martha Mazzawi  
MD, North Attleboro Medical Center

Malek Mazzawi  
Medical Student, University of Massachusetts Medical School

Joseph McCabe  
MD

Anne McHugh  
Director, Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Division at Boston Public Health  
Commission

Frances Medaglia  
PhD, MSN, APPRN, BC, Emmanuel College

Monika Mitra  
Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts Medical School

Syamak Moattari  
Independent Consultant, Boston University

Mary Anne Mudonno  
nurse

Abbe Muller  
Research Nurse Coordinator for the Center for Infectious Diseases, Boston Medical  
Center

Tricia Norkunas  
Project Manager, MPH, Boston University School of Public Health

Kelly O'Connor  
MPH

Sara Rattigan  
Health Communication Specialist, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Roxanne Reddington-Wilde  
PhD, Cambridge College

Kyle Riding  
Medical Laboratory Science Educator, MLT Department at Quincy College

Laura Senier  
MPH, PhD

Deborah Shields  
Public Health Consultant, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

Toni Siegrist  
Beth Israel Hospital

Elizabeth Simpson  
MD, Massachusetts Mental Health Center

Linda Simpson  
Surdy Memorial Hospital

Craig Slatin  
ScD, MPH, BA, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Noemie Sparticue  
MPH, Harvard University

Lawrence Spatz  
UMass Medical School

Deborah Spencer  
RN

Laura Stella  
Surgery Coordinator

Sally Thompson  
MD

David Turiotte  
research professor

Carin Upstill  
Project Manager, Informed Medical Decisions Foundation

Andrew Weiner  
Public Health Project Manager

Margaret Woodruff  
MSN

Carrie Wu  
Medical Student, UMass Medical School