



April 29, 2016

**Statement regarding Chesapeake PSR's decision to support
a ban on fracking in Maryland**

In keeping with our commitment to prevent health crises for which there can be no adequate response, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (Chesapeake PSR) is now calling for a statewide ban on the practice of fracking in Maryland.

After reviewing the scientific literature that has emerged in the last two years on the health and environmental impacts of fracking, we believe there is no regulatory framework that can provide adequate protections. There are now well-documented associations with premature births, respiratory ailments, and other illnesses in areas where unconventional gas development is occurring. Based on our understanding of the types of pollutants contaminating air, water, and soil, it is highly likely that we will soon see other types of diseases, including cancers and neurological illnesses that take years to develop.

In addition, the dramatic rise in earthquakes linked both to underground storage of fracking wastewater and the process of fracking itself in certain geographic regions, clearly demonstrate risks from this practice that were unappreciated just a few years ago. Similarly, the inevitable leakage of toxic materials from wells, storage tanks, pipelines and transport vehicles poses threats to air, water and soil that may be irreversible.

Finally and most importantly, the accelerating pace of climate change demands bold policy changes. Climate disruption poses a grave and immediate threat to human health here in Maryland and globally; half-measures to address this are no longer acceptable. Fossil fuel usage must be phased out rapidly if we hope to achieve the necessary 90 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century. Contrary to industry public relations messaging, fracked gas is not a bridge fuel. Fugitive methane emissions throughout the lifecycle of gas development, production and distribution make this one of the worst fuel choices in terms of climate disruption. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan

and the Maryland General Assembly recently committed to reducing Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030. Permitting fracking in Maryland in light of this new goal would be completely counterproductive. All energy investments must be redirected to energy efficiency and a rapid transition to clean renewable energy.

We have followed the fracking debate closely since former Governor Martin O'Malley issued an executive order in 2011, placing a short moratorium on this practice to allow further study. We participated in public meetings, offered input on proposed regulations and fought vigorously for an eight-year legislative moratorium in 2015, in light of new health data that was emerging. In 2015, Maryland passed a two-year extension, while simultaneously pushing forward regulations to enable fracking to begin in Maryland next year.

Given what we now know about the dangers of fracking, Chesapeake PSR will be working with coalition partners in the coming year in support of a ban on fracking in Maryland. We believe this is the best way to protect current Maryland residents and future generations from the irreversible harms of fracking.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (Chesapeake PSR) works in Maryland to bring a strong medical and health perspective to efforts to address climate change, reduce human exposure to toxic chemicals and pollutants, and promote issues of social justice.