Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility supports a continued moratorium in Maryland on unconventional natural gas development and production (UNGDP, commonly referred to as “fracking”) until such time as an independent scientific panel determines that this practice will not result in adverse effects to human health and the environment. Currently, there is insufficient scientific data to guide the development of best practices for UNGDP. The few studies that do exist indicate that UNGDP would likely be harmful to the health of Maryland residents, and that many of these health effects would be severe and/or irreversible.

Obtaining the necessary scientific data will be a long-term endeavor. It will require more independent studies that evaluate the health over time of both children and adults living at various distances from UNGDP operations. It will also require development and implementation of monitoring protocols for air, water, and soil in states where fracking is currently underway, better tools for detecting and monitoring well leakage, and comprehensive toxicological studies on the chemical formulas used. It will require complete cooperation from the oil and gas industry, including transparency and the sharing of information held by the industry related to the health effects of UNGDP.

Maryland’s natural gas reserves have been present for millions of years. They won’t disappear anytime soon. We believe that Maryland should follow a precautionary approach and wait for further developments in the science before making decisions that could put the health and well-being of its residents in jeopardy.