

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Feb. 5, 2014

Contact: Anna Susman, anna.susman@berlinrosen.com, 646-200-5285

Maryland Legislators Introduce Fracking Moratorium Bill

Over 100 Md. Health Professionals Support Moratorium, Citing Serious Health Risks;

New National Poll Shows Majority of Americans Opposed to Fracking

Annapolis, Md. – Maryland Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo, Senator Karen Montgomery, and 46 other General Assembly members today introduced the Protect Our Health and Communities Act, a bill to enact a long-term statewide moratorium on fracking. At the same time, a new statewide group of doctors, nurses, and other health professionals, [Concerned Health Professionals of Maryland](#) (CHP-Md), [released a letter](#) to General Assembly leadership, signed by more than 100 Maryland health professionals, supporting the moratorium bill. The letter highlighted a recent analysis that found 96 percent of peer-reviewed studies evaluating health impacts from fracking show serious health risks or actual adverse outcomes related to the drilling method.

As scientific evidence of fracking's health threats mounts, Americans are increasingly turning against the controversial drilling method. A Jan. 29th Pew Research Center poll found that [a majority of Americans now oppose increased fracking](#). Furthermore, opposition to fracking within America's scientific community is even greater, with 66 percent of all scientists and 73 percent of biological and medical scientists opposed.

Fracking is a controversial natural gas extraction method that involves blasting millions of gallons of water, sand and toxic chemicals underground at extreme pressure to break up rock and release the gas. [Hundreds of peer-reviewed scientific studies](#) have identified numerous human health risks, air and water pollution, increased earthquake activity, and social problems linked to drilling and fracking in states where it already occurs.

"Almost every week a new study emerges pointing to the alarming health and environmental effects of fracking. To open up Maryland to fracking at this time would simply be reckless," said **Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo**, the House bill sponsor. "New York's health department looked hard at the facts and concluded that fracking just isn't safe. Are New Yorkers' health and safety more important than our own? Surely not."

"Today we announce a new effort to place a moratorium on fracking in our state. This bill will allow us to maintain the public's confidence as we continue to gather data on the long-term effects of the hydraulic fracturing process," said **Senator Karen Montgomery**, the Senate bill sponsor. "Without more scientific data on the public health consequences, we cannot engage in possibly risky energy projects."

“Given the nature of the chemicals used in the fracking process, we may see increases in cancers, neurologic diseases, cardiac and respiratory diseases, and developmental disorders in coming years, but it will take time for these effects to show up,” said **Gina Angiola, M.D., Board Member of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility and cofounder of CHP-Md.**

"No public health agency had any authority in Maryland's commission process. The key report that formed the basis of the proposed fracking regulations was completed before the health study was released. From a public health perspective, the commission was flawed from the beginning," said **Ann Bristow, PhD, Commissioner, Marcellus Shale Advisory Commission and cofounder of CHP-Md.**

“As a nurse-midwife, I am deeply concerned about the elevated risks of birth defects and low birth weight babies seen in families near fracking sites. We need to protect our future generations and continue a moratorium on fracking in Maryland,” said **Katie Huffling, RN, MS, CNM, Director of Programs, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments and cofounder of CHP-Md.**

Background: Two commissioners of the 15-person committee appointed to investigate the risks of fracking in Maryland [released a letter](#) in January describing how the Commission ignored the health risks from fracking and calling for a long-term moratorium on fracking in the state. In their letter, Commissioners Dr. Ann Bristow and Paul Roberts, a Garrett County business owner, outline the flawed work done under the Marcellus Shale Safe Drilling Initiative (MSSDI), which led to proposed regulations that cannot adequately protect the health of Marylanders.

The commissioners’ letter states that [73 percent of the 400+ peer-reviewed](#) scientific research on the effects of fracking have been published since January, 2013. Maryland’s Institute for Applied Environmental Health (MIAEH) also concluded that the likelihood of negative public health impacts was “high” or “moderately high” in seven of eight areas studied. The latest poll in Maryland found 58 percent of Marylanders who know of fracking thought it would harm the state’s environment.

For more information on the statewide campaign for a moratorium on fracking in Maryland: <http://www.dontfrackmd.org>

###