

February 2, 2018

Honorable Charles Baker  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

We write to you as Boards of Health from communities across Massachusetts who are committed to protecting the health, welfare, and safety of the residents of the Commonwealth. We commend Massachusetts' Health Commissioner Monica Bharel's goals to combat health disparities, promote health, and make the best use of our resources in that endeavor.

We are concerned that the rush to develop fracked gas infrastructure (FGI) in our state is in direct conflict with those goals: it increases health disparities, worsens public health and makes poor use of our health care resources by potentially creating public health problems instead of preventing them.

The health concerns surrounding FGI are several. While it is widely recognized that gas extraction via the hydraulic fracturing process causes health problems due to air and water pollution where the drilling is done, many people are not aware that the toxins and carcinogens that travel with the gas when it is extracted from the earth's crust can be emitted when there are releases of gas, unintentional or intentional, anywhere along the pipeline infrastructure.

These substances, acknowledged by Spectra and other gas companies in their reports, include hazardous air pollutants like benzene and formaldehyde, particulate matter, radioactive elements like radon, and heavy metals including mercury, lead and chromium. These toxins pose a health risk as they can potentially cause cancers like leukemia, lung problems like asthma and lung cancer, heart deformities in babies, miscarriages, and neurologic disease.

Natural gas pipelines pose threats to human health and to the environment at every stage of processing and delivery including interstate transmission pipelines, distribution pipelines, storage facilities, metering and regulating stations, compressor stations, and liquefied natural gas facilities. Without comprehensive health impact assessments of the effects of these toxins and carcinogens, it is impossible to know the magnitude of risk that these pollutants pose to human health.

New FGI in our state also threatens public health because it is a driver of climate change, releasing significant amounts of methane, nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide. New interstate pipelines add significant amounts of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, exacerbating climate change. Climate change is disrupting our state's natural ecosystems and built infrastructure and negatively impacting human health, and is leading to increased rates of infectious diseases and cancer.

FGI also threaten public health and safety due to leaks, water contamination, and explosions; accidents have increased five-fold across the United States between the years 2000 and 2010.

We agree with the American Medical Association that FGI has a potentially significant human health impact and that any expanded or new FGI requires comprehensive health impact assessments to evaluate these health risks.

Also, according to an analysis by our State Attorney General, an expanded FGI is unnecessary and alternatives such as renewable energy and energy efficiency are healthier and less expensive.

While we recognize that our legislators and governor may differ in their views of FGI, they are unanimous in their commitment to promote and protect the public health, welfare and safety of the residents of the Commonwealth. We need safe, reliable and affordable energy for our residents, businesses and municipalities. Our state can and must achieve those goals by investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency rather than in more fossil fuels that warm our planet and create health hazards for all our residents.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Abington Board of Health  
Adams Board of Health  
Amherst Board of Health\*  
Arlington Board of Health  
Ashburnham Board of Health  
Ashby Board of Health  
Athol Board of Health  
Bedford Board of Health  
Bellingham Board of Health  
Billerica Board of Health  
Boston Board of Health\*  
Buckland Board of Health  
Cambridge Board of Health  
Canton Board of Health  
Carlisle Board of Health  
Chicopee Board of Health  
Chilmark Board of Health  
Cohasset Board of Health  
Concord Board of Health  
Conway Board of Health  
Dalton Board of Health\*  
Deerfield Board of Health  
Eastham Board of Health  
Egremont Board of Health  
Essex Board of Health  
Grafton Board of Health  
Great Barrington Board of Health

Harvard Board of Health  
Holyoke Board of Health  
Lanesborough Board of Health  
Lexington Board of Health\*  
Ludlow Board of Health  
Methuen Board of Health  
Millis Board of Health  
Natick Board of Health\*  
Newton Board of Health  
Norfolk Board of Health  
Norton Board of Health  
Norwood Board of Health  
Northampton Board of Health\*  
Provincetown Board of Health  
Rehoboth Board of Health  
Rockport Board of Health  
Shelburne Board of Health  
Stoughton Board of Health  
Stow Board of Health  
Townsend Board of Health  
Uxbridge Board of Health  
Walpole Board of Health  
Westfield Board of Health  
West Springfield Board of Health  
Weymouth Board of Health  
Winthrop Board of Health

\* Indicates a personal letter enclosed