



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

**CARMINE L. GENTILE**  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
13TH MIDDLESEX DISTRICT  
SUDBURY • CONCORD • WAYLAND  
MARLBOROUGH • LINCOLN

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 167  
TEL. (617) 722-2810  
Carmine.Gentile@MAhouse.gov

Vice Chair  
Joint Committee on Higher Education

Committees:  
Environment and Natural Resources  
State Administration  
and Regulatory Oversight  
Elder Affairs

May 17, 2023

Representative Daniel Cahill, Chair  
Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
State House, Room 527A  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Rebecca Rausch, Chair  
Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
State House, Room 218  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Cahill and Chair Rausch,

I write to you in support of my sponsored legislation, H.815 and the Senate counterpart S.558, filed by Senator Marc Pacheco, *An Act to eliminate hydraulic fracturing in the Commonwealth*. These bills would place an outright ban on hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, as well as the collection, storage, treatment, or disposal of wastewater and other byproducts of fracking.

The environmental harm of fracking is well documented. Wastewater, which consists of used fracking fluid, produced contaminated water, and a large number of natural contaminants ranging from heavy metals to radioactive materials, must be disposed of in some way—often in surface level pits or via injection into deep wells. Both methods are extremely environmentally harmful.

Disposal in surface level pits leads to two sources of pollution and contamination. The first is in water pollution, as the contaminated wastewater can and does find its way into groundwater and surface water resources, in the process contaminating drinking water. The second is in air pollution, as after the liquid evaporates, the wastewater leaves behind what is essentially a slurry of toxic chemicals sitting in the open. The pollution that results from this sort of contamination leads to, according to the University of Colorado Anschutz, mothers living near intense oil or gas development having a 40-70% higher chance of having children with congenital heart defects.

Disposal via injection into deep water wells is hardly better, with the United States Geological Survey linking such injection—as well as the practice of hydraulic fracturing more generally—to a number of harmful earthquakes in Oklahoma and Texas.

Aside from concerns about wastewater pollution and earthquakes, there are many other negative environmental impacts of fracking, including how much freshwater the practice demands, the prevalence of oil spills when transporting oil and gas produced by fracking, gas pollution, and more.

All of these concerns are especially relevant in Massachusetts, given the potential future oil and gas development that could take place in the Hartford basin. The Hartford basin stretches into western Massachusetts, near major population centers such as Springfield and major water sources such as the Quabbin Reservoir, and although the basin is currently unexplored and untapped, future technology may render the area suitable for oil and gas exploration. The potential of bringing pollution, contamination, and all the negative public health concerns that come with that to Massachusetts should be stamped out.

In the last decade, similar concerns have pushed the states of Maryland, Vermont and Washington to ban fracking outright, while other states such as New York and California are phasing out fracking by refusing to approve new permits, with an outright ban as an eventual stated goal.

For the last two legislative sessions, I have filed bills that would place an eight-year moratorium on fracking. However, I am now convinced that Massachusetts does not need to study this issue or delay any longer, and instead simply ought to pre-emptively outlaw fracking. *An Act to eliminate hydraulic fracturing in the Commonwealth* has been reported favorably by the ENRA Committee for multiple sessions, and the language was passed in the Senate in 2018 as part of S.2564, *An Act to promote a clean energy future*, but it was not taken up by the House at that time.

For these reasons, I humbly request that the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources report these bills favorably without delay. Thank you for consideration of this written testimony and I look forward to the opportunity to discuss this matter with you further.

Sincerely,



Carmine L. Gentile  
State Representative  
13<sup>th</sup> Middlesex District