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State health care providers Call for Moratorium on new gas pipeline infrastructure pending comprehensive health impact study

BOSTON, Massachusetts - October 11, 2016 – A group of concerned health care providers from across the Commonwealth today issued a strong call to state and federal officials to institute an immediate moratorium on new major gas pipeline infrastructure projects in Massachusetts until the impact of these projects on the health of the communities affected can be adequately determined through a Comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (“CHIA”).

At a press conference held this morning across from the site of active construction of a metering and regulating station for a fracked gas transmission pipeline in West Roxbury, the group spoke to a crowd of approximately 40 supporters and health care professionals, as well as members of the press. Health care providers who addressed the crowd included Dr. Curt Nordgaard, a pediatrician and researcher in air quality; Dr. Michael Cocchi, a critical care and emergency medicine physician and member of the Steering Committee for Stop the West Roxbury Lateral Pipeline; and Seamus Whelan, RN, a Mass Nurses Association member and member of the Steering Committee for Stop the West Roxbury Lateral Pipeline. Kelly Erskine, a mother of three from Rehoboth, also spoke about her own experience learning about a planned gas compressor station to be built in her town and about her concerns regarding its effects on the health of her children and the overall community.

Massachusetts Health Care Providers Against Fracked Gas (MHCPAFG), which is comprised of professionals from multiple areas of health care, issued the **Call for a Moratorium** to bring specific attention to the health-related issues involved with the myriad of gas infrastructure projects being pursued across the state. They join the ranks of other groups, including the American Medical Association, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Massachusetts Nurses Association and Concerned Health Professionals of New York, calling for a thorough assessment of the impact of these activities on public health and safety.

The Call for a Moratorium emphasizes the safety threats of these projects, noting, *“natural gas is highly flammable and poses serious safety risks at all stages of processing and delivery including but not limited to interstate transmission pipelines, distribution pipelines, storage facilities, metering and regulating stations, compressor stations, and liquefied natural gas facilities.”*

Furthermore, the Call notes that natural gas infrastructure systems are inherently prone to leaks because of the extremely high pressure of interstate transmission systems and poorly maintained, aging distribution systems.

The Call for a Moratorium indicates that the operation of natural gas facilities generates toxic, cancer-causing, and radioactive pollution due to the presence of naturally co-occurring contaminants, toxic additives to the hydraulic fracturing process used to produce much of the country's natural gas supply, and through the operation of transmission pipelines.

Michael Cocchi, MD, of Massachusetts Health Care Providers Against Fracked Gas, said, *“Health care providers have a unique responsibility to speak out against any threat to the health and safety of the patients for whom they care, and the broader community. We are using our medical and public health expertise and our collective voice to call attention to the need for a comprehensive health impact assessment to address the cumulative impact of major gas pipeline projects across Massachusetts. Until this can be accomplished, these projects should be put on hold and not advance any further.”*

About Massachusetts Health Care Providers Against Fracked Gas: MHCPAFG is a group of multidisciplinary health care providers committed to reducing, if not eliminating, the health risks associated with fracked gas and climate change. The group includes physicians, nurses, and other allied health providers, as well as public health professionals. MHCPAFG is currently focused on drawing attention to the health risks associated with Spectra’s Atlantic Bridge, Northeast Access, and Algonquin Incremental Market projects, and Kinder Morgan’s Connecticut Expansion Project in Massachusetts.

For a list of references and source documents, including our white paper, please contact masshcprovidersafg@gmail.com and <http://mhcpafg.org/>