

A Call to Climate Action

Statement on Fracking

by the Leaders of Maryland's Christian Communities

“The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants too.” *Psalms 24:1*

January 2017

We are the bishops and judicatory leaders of Christian churches throughout Maryland and beyond, representing several thousand churches in the state. In light of the overwhelming evidence that fracking could permanently harm our people, our water, and our climate, we call on the Maryland General Assembly to pass a statewide ban on fracking before any drilling can begin.

Like all people everywhere, we live from and rely on the health and well-being of God’s creation – air, water, and land; wildlife and domestic animals; local ecosystems; and the great interconnected ecosystem that the whole earth shares.

The religious traditions that we represent offer values that guide us in wise and ethical decision-making, as citizens of creation. Among these are: the promotion of the common good, the just treatment of our neighbors including the generations to come, and the integrity and care of the Earth itself.

As faith leaders, we’ve come to believe that there are significant risks, known and unknown, posed by fracking that we implore our elected officials to take to heart. Many of these risks are to the health of individuals and communities, especially to the most vulnerable, the young, the poor, and those who feel they have no power or influence in policy decisions. There are other risks as well to public health, to groundwater, to property values, and to our climate through methane pollution. Risk is present not only in drilling but also in pipeline construction and transportation of natural gas.

As the fourth annual compendium of scientific and journalistic articles related to fracking, published last fall by Physicians for Social Responsibility and Concerned Health Officials of New York, concluded:

*...findings to date from scientific, medical, and journalistic investigations combine to demonstrate that fracking poses significant threats to air, water, health, public safety, climate stability, seismic stability, community cohesion, and long-term economic vitality. Emerging data from a rapidly expanding body of evidence continue to reveal **a plethora of recurring problems and harms that cannot be averted** or cannot be sufficiently averted through regulatory frameworks. (Emphasis ours.)*

Clearly the common good, the welfare of individuals and communities, and the sustainability of environmental systems and resources are all at risk where fracking is permitted.

Those who argue in favor of fracking in Western Maryland cite short-term economic benefits. While these might make fracking seem tantalizing and politically expedient, evidence suggests

that such benefits are temporary at best. Our faith traditions have taught us to take the long view: we cannot justify taking intolerable risks with permanent consequences to human health and the health of water, land, and climate. There is mounting evidence that the long-term effects of fracking could be harmful to the citizens of Maryland, the environment, and to generations who will have to live with the results of the decisions we make now.

Happily, investing in renewable energy like wind and solar in Maryland would bring real economic benefits and, over time, lower energy costs in a way that is far more compatible with the values that we hold. Accordingly, we also advocated the reinstatement of the Clean Energy Jobs Act that will, over time, lower energy costs and create jobs.

As you deliberate about whether to allow fracking in our state, we, the bishops and executives of the denominations of the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council, ask that you consider this question for what it truly is: a primarily ethical one that concerns our most cherished values and therefore one that must be approached with a steward-like care for the health and well-being of all citizens and the environment on which all lives depend. In so doing, we are hopeful that you will conclude with us that the pernicious effects of fracking clearly outweigh its perceived benefits and that therefore the Maryland legislature is morally bound to pass immediately a statewide ban on its practice.

Signed,

The Ecumenical Leaders Group of Maryland *

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*The Ecumenical Leaders Group is made of the bishops, presidents, executives of Christian denominations in Maryland called together by Central Maryland Ecumenical Council. The ELG meets five times a year and we address, with one voice larger justice issues. For More Information Contact Gary Gillespie, Executive Director, Central Maryland Ecumenical Council. 443-703-6498 (cell) or cmecouncil@gmail.com