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**A NEW FRACKING LANDSCAPE: Report on Recent Science Shows
Overwhelming Evidence of Harm**

**Health professional groups raise alarm that build-out of drilling and fracking operations
is creating a public health crisis.**

Massachusetts is subject to health risks from methane (natural) gas processing, transport, and storage, according to research outlined in a new report released today -- the [Compendium of Scientific, Medical, and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking, 5th Edition](#).

The new report, published by two leading health professional organizations—[Physicians for Social Responsibility](#) and [Concerned Health Professionals of New York](#)—compiles the rapidly emerging science on the health dangers posed by the extraction and distribution of methane gas. The report reviews more than 1,300 scientific studies that have been published in this fast-moving field, including studies that show elevated risks of respiratory disease, cancer, low birth weight and preterm birth in communities living near gas wells in Pennsylvania, Texas and Colorado. Most of these articles have been published since 2013, and about a quarter were published in 2017 alone.

Five of the take-aways from the analysis in the Compendium are:

- **Extraction of methane gas poses serious harm to public health, and no regulatory framework can prevent those harms.** Adverse impacts include low birth weight and

preterm birth, both of which are leading causes of infant death; respiratory impacts; cancer risks, and occupational health and safety risks.

- **Drinking water contamination from drilling, fracking, and disposal of fracking waste is a grave concern.** Numerous pathways of contamination are now proven, and many cases of contamination across the country show that these impacts are common and inevitable.
- **Natural gas is a threat to the climate, and may be worse than coal due to substantial methane leaks.** Studies consistently show that methane is worse for the climate than previously understood, that drilling and fracking and associated infrastructure leak more methane than previously estimated, and that *rising* methane levels *are now driving serious adverse climate impacts*.
- **Fracking infrastructure poses serious exposure risks to those living nearby.** New evidence demonstrates that pipelines, compressor stations, underground storage, LNG facilities, and other infrastructure components are responsible for substantial public health and climate change impacts. The massive build-out of this infrastructure is rarely acknowledged, but pipeline disasters, major methane leaks, and reports of local toxic emissions *and related health concerns* are increasingly common.
- **Fracking raises environmental justice issues.** Emerging evidence reveals disproportionate siting of fracking and associated infrastructure in non-white and low-income communities.

Health professionals in Massachusetts have been raising the alarm in recent months about the local health risks from methane gas. In January 2018, 150 public health and medical professionals met for a day-long conference at Boston University evaluating the health impacts of natural gas infrastructure in Massachusetts¹. The conference was sponsored by eight local health organizations, including the Massachusetts Medical Society and the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards, and focused on health risks related to explosions, gas leaks from New England's aging distribution infrastructure, and toxic emissions from compressor stations. Last month, more than 50 municipal boards of health sent a letter to Governor Charlie Baker calling for comprehensive health impact assessments prior to the construction of any further natural gas infrastructure in Massachusetts².

Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility said "Most of our methane gas in Massachusetts comes from drilling and fracking wells that cause serious harms to public health. Further studies will continue to illuminate the full extent of those ill effects and to define causal pathways in further detail, but it is abundantly clear that the practice is not safe and that no set of regulations can make it safe."

Physicians for Social Responsibility and other health groups are taking the Compendium to policymakers and urging prohibitions on fracking. In February, a Republican-controlled committee of the Florida State Senate voted unanimously to support a ban on fracking, following widespread opposition across the state. Earlier editions of the Compendium have been widely

¹ "Natural Gas Infrastructure and Public Health" available at <https://www.bu.edu/earth/naturalgaspublichealth/>

² Available at <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/blog/Final%20BOH%20Letter%20%281%29.pdf>

used by policymakers to establish bans on fracking, including in Vermont, New York, Maryland, communities in California, Colorado, and other states, as well as in France, Scotland, Wales, the Netherlands, Ireland, Germany, and parts of Canada.

Given the continuous growth in research, the Compendium is designed as a living document. It is publicly available on the website of Physicians for Social Responsibility at psr.org/compendium.

Local health experts (contact information above) are available to comment on the Compendium and its implications for Massachusetts.