

October 17, 2019

Pennsylvania General Assembly
Capitol Complex
Harrisburg, PA 17120

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Dear Legislators,

Today, the Better Path Coalition sent a letter signed by x organizations and X individuals to your colleagues, Representatives O'Neal and Ortitay. Our letter recommends next steps based on comments Representative O'Neal made at the public meeting with the Department of Health concerning the alarming number of cases of rare childhood cancers being diagnosed in Washington, Green, Fayette, and Westmoreland counties. As you know, at least 67 children have been diagnosed in the past decade. Tragically, thirteen of them have died.

At the meeting that both O'Neal and Ortitay attended, O'Neal said, "We have to understand, yes, it might be fracking," causing the cancers. He continued, "So, yes, I believe we should investigate fracking to figure out what's going on, but we should also be investigating the other scenarios throughout our community."

We agree with Representative O'Neal. The next steps we recommend in our letter include the following:

- 1) The state must conduct an investigation into environmental causes of the cancers. The genetic study for which O'Neal and Ortitay have secured funding will not achieve the end of determining what role fracking plays in the marked increase in cancer diagnoses in the past fifteen years since the first unconventional well in Pennsylvania was drilled.
- 2) Another hearing must be held in the affected communities so that everyone wishing to speak and ask questions has an opportunity to be heard and have their concerns addressed.
- 3) As members of the Environmental Resources and Energy committee, O'Neal and Ortitay must hold a hearing so that you and your colleagues can hear directly from affected residents including Janice Blanock, Carla Marratto Cumming, Christine Barton, Cindy Valent, Alison Cobb, and others who have lost loved ones or whose family members are battling the disease.

When you return to Harrisburg next week, you will consider a number of bills that would subsidize additional fracking and make legal dangerous practices, like the spreading of drilling waste on unpaved roads. We are specifically referring to the Energize PA bills (HB1100 - HB1107), SB866, SB790, and the Restore PA bills (HB1585 and SB725). If there is any chance that fracking is taking the lives of children, those measures should not move forward.

We call on you to advocate for a halt to those bills and any others that would pose similar risks and, instead, support your colleagues as they carry out the steps we recommend and any others you deem necessary. Unless and until you are able to demonstrate conclusively that fracking is not the cause, it must be considered a possible deadly threat to our children and treated with the requisite seriousness.

Respectfully,

Karen Feridun, Berks Gas Truth

Michael Bagdes-Canning, Marcellus Outreach Butler

Tammy Murphy, Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania

Sharon Furlong, Bucks Environmental Action

Michael Schroeder, Lebanon Pipeline Awareness

On behalf of the Better Path Coalition

Cc: Governor Tom Wolf

Secretary Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania Department of Health

Secretary Patrick McDonnell, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Attorney General Josh Shapiro

Auditor General Eugene DePasquale