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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **New Report Documents Fracking in Pennsylvania Gas Wells with PFAS; 160 Million Pounds of Undisclosed Chemicals Could be PFAS; Groups Call for Ban on PFAS Use in Oil and Gas Wells**

Washington D.C. — Multiple Pennsylvania-based organizations are urging the state to prohibit the use in oil and gas wells of a highly toxic and persistent class of chemicals known as PFAS. They cited a new report documenting that between 2012 and 2022, oil and gas companies used PFAS in several Pennsylvania unconventional gas wells. The report revealed that, over the same period, oil and gas firms injected thousands of wells with a staggering 160 million pounds of undisclosed trade secret chemicals, some of which could be additional PFAS.

[In a letter to Gov. Josh Shapiro and other state officials](#), the groups called for full disclosure of chemicals used in oil and gas extraction and a ban on PFAS use in those operations.

[The new report, by Physicians for Social Responsibility](#), details the risks from injecting PFAS into Pennsylvania’s oil and gas wells, as well as risks from the disposal of millions of tons of liquid and solid waste associated with the wells.

Furthermore, the report demonstrates that gaps built into Pennsylvania’s industry-friendly disclosure rules prevent the public from knowing how widely PFAS – or other toxic chemicals – have been used in hydraulic fracturing as well as in other stages and methods of oil and gas extraction.

The report, entitled *Fracking with “Forever Chemicals” in Pennsylvania*, is based on publicly available information disclosed by the oil and gas industry.

PFAS are a highly dangerous class of human-made chemicals known for their extreme toxicity, severe health effects, including cancer, and resistance to breaking down in the environment, leading to their nickname, “forever chemicals.” Private water wells in rural areas, where most of Pennsylvania’s drilling and fracking are

conducted, may be at particularly high risk of contamination. Once contaminated, groundwater is especially difficult to clean up.

Communities where oil and gas waste is taken for disposal that are located miles from drilling sites could also face risks from PFAS contamination.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has indicated that for some types of PFAS, no amount of the chemical in drinking water is safe.

PSR's report documents that:

- Between 2012 and 2022, oil and gas companies injected eight unconventional gas wells in three Western Pennsylvania counties with a type of PFAS called PTFE, commonly known as Teflon. However, these industry-reported uses of PFAS may significantly underrepresent the use of PFAS in Pennsylvania's oil and gas wells.
- During the same period, oil and gas companies injected more than 5,000 unconventional gas wells in Pennsylvania with 160 million pounds of trade secret chemicals. Some of these chemicals could be PFAS.
- Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection knows the identities of these chemicals, but state law allows oil and gas companies to use trade secret designations to withhold these identities from the public.

These findings raise concerns that residents may unknowingly be exposed to PFAS and other hazardous substances used in hundreds or even thousands of oil and gas wells.

In their letter to Gov. Shapiro and other state officials, the Pennsylvania-based organizations called for the state to adopt policies consistent with a law passed last year in Colorado that bans PFAS in oil and gas wells and requires full disclosure of each chemical injected into the wells for any purpose. The groups include Better Path Coalition, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Environmental Health Project, FracTracker Alliance, and Protect PT. Duquesne University Professor of Biological Sciences, John Stolz, also signed the letter.

Under the type of chemical disclosure policy proposed in the letter, oil and gas companies would still be able to protect chemical formulas as trade secrets, similar to the way in which food makers protect recipes but disclose individual ingredients. In 2020, a criminal grand jury convened by Shapiro, who was then serving as Pennsylvania's Attorney General, recommended a similar policy for Pennsylvania.

"The vast number of chemical trade secret claims raise the potential that PFAS use is even more widespread than reported," stated Dusty Horwitt, J.D., the report's lead author. "Pennsylvania officials should act immediately to require full disclosure of all chemicals used in oil and gas wells and prohibit the use of PFAS in oil and gas extraction."

"These 'forever' chemicals are far too dangerous to be set loose in the environment," observed report coauthor Barbara Gottlieb. "Once this toxic genie is out of the bottle, there is no putting it back."

“The communities where fracking is happening have no idea what dangers this industry is bringing to their backyards, because the oil and gas industry has a history of concealing their activities,” said Gillian Graber, Executive Director of Protect PT (Penn-Trafford). “This report will shed some much-needed light for community members on some of the chemicals used in this industrial process.”

"To protect residents from PFAS exposure, Pennsylvania must pass legislation that restricts the oil and gas industry from using any PFAS pollutants in their operations," said Alison L. Steele, executive director of the Environmental Health Project. "Further, state agencies must monitor and test for PFAS, conduct health assessments of residents, and provide information about PFAS health risks to the public. Only then can Pennsylvania residents rest easier that the oil and gas industry is not degrading their health with PFAS pollution."

“PFAS are known to accumulate over time in humans and our environment, causing higher cholesterol, thyroid disease, infertility, cancer and more,” said Tonyehn Verkitus, Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania. “The majority of PFAS do not break down, but continue to pose health and environmental risks. We cannot allow these industries to continue to play roulette with our health and environment. It is imperative that Pennsylvania take immediate action to cease use of these dangerous chemicals.”

“This report is yet another stark reminder of how dangerous and toxic fracking is and how little the public is let in on that fact,” said Karen Feridun, Co-founder of the Better Path Coalition. “We are all at risk thanks to lack of transparency about what our government knows, waste truck-sized holes in reporting systems, and lack of accountability when drillers don’t bother reporting anything at all. As always, the system is gamed in favor of the polluter. It just makes the case for an end to drilling stronger.”

“Fracking and drilling for gas and oil in Pennsylvania has inflicted profound harm on people’s health and the environment. The fact that highly toxic forever chemicals, or PFAS, have been added to the chemical mix demands that the state act immediately to stop this contamination,” said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network. “The use of PFAS and chemicals that can break down into PFAS in fracking and drilling must be banned to halt its insidious spread into our air, water, environment, and ultimately into us.”

A list of events related to the report’s release follows:

### **October 24**

11 a.m. webinar hosted by PSR. [Sign up for the webinar here.](#)

### **October 26**

6:30 p.m. webinar hosted by Protect PT. [Sign up for the webinar here.](#)

### **November 2**

Noon brown bag webinar for Pa. legislators hosted by Better Path Coalition. [Sign up for the webinar here.](#)

7 p.m. Better Path Presents webinar hosted by Better Path Coalition. [Sign up for the webinar here.](#)

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