Governor Tom Wolf  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  

January 4, 2020  

Dear Governor Wolf,  

The Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network (UUPLAN) welcomes your decision to conduct geographically specific studies in areas of southwestern Pennsylvania with a heavy presence of the unconventional gas development (UGD) industry. We share the community’s concerns about the broad potential health impact of fracking on illnesses and conditions such as asthma, birth defects, heart disease, etc. al., and specifically rare childhood cancers.  

UUPLAN was a member of a Faith group that met with the PA Department of Health (PDOH) nearly four years ago about our health and environmental concerns about fracking. This was soon after New York had issued its ban. We were disappointed as we never saw any action to address the concern. The health exposures have continued due to that inaction.  

This initial step in the right direction responds to the irrepresible pleas of Pennsylvania residents. We agree with the Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) calls for accountability and transparency by the PDOH in their selection of an independent academic research center that will perform the study and other suggestions made in their public statement.  

Our Pennsylvania Constitution is very clear that citizens of our state have the right to clean air and clean water, and our public officials have the “Trusteeship” duty to protect that. With over 1500 studies establishing the health and environmental effects of fracking, there is a constitutional duty to act now. As we see many states and nations adding to the mounting list of those stopping fracking, e.g., New York, Maryland, UK, Ireland, states within Brazil, and many more, we can only question how our constitutional rights are not being honored. You have a powerful tool in the constitution. Why wait for the courts to wield that tool as they were called upon in the Robinson township, and the Environmental Defense Foundation cases? The outcome of a lawsuit on this issue is predictable, but is not the most direct constitutional route to protect our citizens.  

This fracking journey calls to mind the cigarette catastrophe. We investigated for 60 yrs whether cigarettes caused cancer. The industry, masters of obfuscation and doubt, managed to perpetuate the charade for 60 years. Now we see obfuscation occurring again with the fracking industry. There is a plethora of data against fracking, but the industry continues to manufacture doubt about the health effects. Cigarettes were different though. One had a choice about whether they smoked. Here, individuals with cancer or asthma or a baby born with birth defects had no choice once the fracking industry moved in.  

Until the investigations prove that the activities of the unconventional gas development industry are safe, there should be, at a minimum, a moratorium on future infrastructure, and preferably a moratorium on all fracking activities to ensure that no further harm is done. We urge the governor to hold the shale gas industry accountable for health impacts and to have all state and local municipalities abide by the precautionary principle as a measure of protection to Pennsylvania residents until the results of the studies are revealed.
As Martin Luther King said, "We will repent in the future, not for the evil of the few, but for the silence of the many." Our faith group asks you to speak boldly on this issue, and leave the legacy you deserve.

P.S. - One of our members is a businessperson who was pro-fracking; when he did the research ten years ago, he became deeply concerned and became anti fracking. His story is here in this short film. [https://vimeo.com/380167172](https://vimeo.com/380167172)

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