

June 13, 2016

Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Member of the Assembly:

On behalf of the signatory organizations below, representing hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians, we write to **urge you to oppose SB 279 (the “Penn Grade Crude Development Advisory Council” bill)**.

The clear intention of the bill is to eliminate new requirements for conventional oil and gas operations (25 PA Code Chapter 78) and divert limited state resources to promote the industry. This legislative action ignores a long public process and circumvents Pennsylvania’s regulatory system. Most importantly, it would deprive Pennsylvania residents of much needed protections for their air, water, and health.

Passage of SB 279 would make Pennsylvania the only state in the nation to abandon oil and gas regulations after they’ve been fully developed and vetted. Other states have added on to their regulations to cover new shale operations, but have never completely exempted existing conventional operations in the process.

Over the course of nearly five years, DEP revised the new oil and gas regulations through a transparent process, including 12 public hearings and nearly 30,000 comments submitted by residents, industry, environmental organizations, and local and state officials. The attempt now to prevent their adoption and give the industry and the legislature greater influence over the regulatory process is both irresponsible and an affront to this extensive process and the public interest.

Conventional oil and gas operators use modern-day technologies that pose environmental risks—yet existing regulations are over 30 years old. Nearly all operators rely on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) to stimulate production, use chemicals and large volumes of water, disturb land, generate toxic waste, spill polluting substances, and cause air pollution.

In recent years, the rate of inspections at conventional wells has declined, but the rate of environmental violations has gone up. According to the Department of Environmental Protection, in 2014, DEP inspections were split 50-50 between unconventional and conventional operations—but conventional operations accounted for over three-quarters of violations. In addition, between 2008-2014, conventional operations were involved in over 60% of the DEP investigations of contamination of drinking water supplies from methane.

The legislature has always recognized the necessity of environmental protection requirements for all oil and gas operations. In 2012, the legislature passed Act 13, directing DEP to develop new oil and gas regulations for the industry as a whole. In 2014, the

legislature passed Act 126, explicitly requiring DEP to create regulations for conventional operations (Chapter 78), and unconventional operations (Chapter 78a).

SB 279 would also enact an advisory council, made up primarily of industry representatives, the intent of which can only be construed to give industry undue influence on government, and to guarantee that any future regulations related to conventional drilling support industry's interests. The establishment of such a council is clearly unnecessary and a waste of taxpayer resources, as a Conventional Oil and Gas Advisory Committee already exists.

For these reasons—and for the sake of air, water, and health across the Commonwealth—we urge you to vote NO on SB 279.