

My name is Lois Bower-Bjornson. I am the southwestern Pennsylvania field organizer with Clean Air Council and the host of frackland tours. Clean Air Council has been protecting Pennsylvanian's air quality and environment for over 50 years. Thank you for the opportunity to comment today.

I live and grew up in the most heavily fracked county in our state, Washington county. My home is completely encompassed by the oil and gas industry, including well pads, compressor stations, pipelines, pig launchers, holding tanks, and truck traffic. At every phase of oil and gas production, harmful air pollutants are deliberately<sup>1</sup> released. These air pollutants include such things as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, formaldehyde, naphthalene.

I have raised four children in my community - all who have suffered negative health impacts from the oil and gas industry and fracking. According to a pilot study with environmental health news and award winning reporter Kristina Marusic, *Fractured, the body and burden of proof* measured what chemicals are in people's bodies that live next to or close to fracking. My entire family including all four of my children have fracking chemicals in their bodies due to the air we breathe.

Throughout the past decade, fracking and related infrastructure have moved dangerously close to our homes, schools and communities. As these highly industrialized operations move ever closer, they continue to pollute our air, contaminate our water, and harm our health. Research shows that living within at least 2,500 feet of fracking infrastructure exposes residents to unsafe levels of pollution linked to cancer, asthma, impacts on birth outcomes<sup>2</sup>, and other serious health problems. There are numerous studies pointing to the harms of living in close proximity to fracking operations. The recent Pitt studies looked at the health risks of Southwest Pennsylvania residents who live close to fracking and found a strong association with low-birthweight during gas production, increased chance of children developing the rare cancer lymphoma, and increased risk of asthma.

And yet, Pennsylvania only requires an easily waived 500 feet between fracking and homes. A 2020 Pennsylvania Grand Jury report on fracking called this distance "woefully inadequate" and recommended a 2,500 foot buffer between fracking and homes, as well as greater distances for schools. Every day, Pennsylvania residents' health and safety are at unnecessary risk due to outdated laws.

As an organization that takes pride in listening deeply to the people impacted by the oil and gas industry, we can recount countless stories from people across the state, and even across the country, whose health, wellbeing, and peace of mind have been hurt by their proximity to oil and gas infrastructure. We know of a number of cases of rare cancer in children in Washington County. We know of drinking water contamination and elevated levels of non-naturally occurring chemicals found in people's bodies. We hear about the financial burden incurred by poor and working families who don't have adequate access to healthcare or insurance.

I am fortunate in that I have the opportunity to support some of the impacted residents that live in Washington County. All of these people live next to oil and gas infrastructure that are 200 to 500 feet from their homes, with no financial gain. These residents have shared with me that they have developed the following cancers and serious health impacts:

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<sup>1</sup> [Protective Buffers PA](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Protective Buffers PA](#)

- Stage four esophageal cancer, that has spread to the liver and both femurs.
- Throat cancer
- Acute myeloid leukemia. This cancer has only 200 cases nationwide according to research from the Mayo Clinic. One of the causes of this cancer is benzene exposure.
- Other rare cancers such as Ewing Sarcoma
- Myoepithelial carcinoma salivary gland cancer
- A five-year-old boy has no cognitive skills, is fed through a feeding tube, and had open heart surgery at five days old

It is past time that elected officials take these health impacts people who live near fracking are experiencing much more seriously. We need action now. We need strong, common sense protective buffers to better protect residents from the impacts of this infrastructure. To be clear, this bill is not about stopping fracking in Pennsylvania altogether - it *is* about being much smarter about where fracking should occur in a way that limits harms to our residents. So these setbacks are already a compromise compared to the relief that residents truly need. Clean Air Council supports House Bill 170, as it would be a positive first step towards ensuring that Pennsylvania residents are better protected from the dangers that come from oil and gas and petrochemical infrastructure. The reality is that we needed this legislation on the books and actively enforced 15 years ago. The reality is that we [need even greater protective buffers for more gas and petrochemical sources](#) than are being proposed. Our members, our neighbors, and Pennsylvania residents cannot wait any longer for better protection. We strongly urge elected officials to support and bolster House Bill 170.<sup>3</sup>

There is broad support for increased setback distances between gas infrastructure and Pennsylvania residents. A 2021 [poll conducted by Data for Progress](#) showed that Pennsylvanians support increased setback distances between this infrastructure and homes, schools, hospitals, childcare centers, and other residential buildings by a 60% margin. Since 2021, Clean Air Council and partners have assisted 4,392 Pennsylvania residents in expressing their support for increased setbacks to their local elected officials.

In addition to this legislation, the Council believes DEP has the legal authority, scientific evidence, and public support needed to adopt setback distances that prevent this infrastructure from being built too close to our homes, schools, hospitals, streams, and wetlands. We urge DEP to research and propose regulations to require setbacks that better protect residents and our natural resources from this destructive and harmful infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration

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<sup>3</sup> [Ohio River Valley Institute](#)