Re: Proposed Spectra/Enbridge natural gas compressor station in Weymouth

Dear Governor Baker,

We write to you as co-leaders of Physicians for Policy Action, a health advocacy group of more than 100 physicians based at Harvard Medical School. We wish to alert you to our concerns about the health risks of the proposed Spectra/Enbridge natural gas compressor station in Weymouth and to urge you to obtain an independent comprehensive health impact assessment of the project before issuing state permits for the initiation of construction.

An increasing body of peer-reviewed medical studies demonstrates that there are serious health concerns around natural gas production, infrastructure and leaks, including the elaboration of known carcinogens (such as benzene), lead, and particulate matter\(^1\); pollution of drinking water\(^2\); and the release of methane with its associated impact on climate change\(^3\). Recently, a population-based study from Colorado identified an association between pediatric acute lymphocytic leukemia and proximity to active natural gas wells\(^4\). A 2016 study from the Geisinger Health System in Pennsylvania showed that prenatal residential exposure to natural gas development activity was associated with preterm birth\(^5\). Additional studies have demonstrated associations between residential proximity to natural gas production and asthma and increased hospitalization rates\(^6,7\).

Because of these data, the Massachusetts Medical Society, the American Medical Association, the Massachusetts Nurses’ Association and more than 30 Massachusetts boards of health have called for health impact assessments prior to construction of natural gas infrastructure, such as the proposed Spectra/Enbridge natural gas compressor station.

A health impact assessment is essential to fully understand the potential health risks of a proposed project to the nearby population and is particularly relevant for the Spectra/Enbridge compressor station, which is in immediate proximity to a densely-populated community with homes, schools and daycare centers. Moreover, data presented last month by a citizen-scientist, Dr. Curt Nordgaard, demonstrated that eight...
volatile organic compounds, including benzene, were detectable in air samples from Weymouth and Braintree at levels exceeding DEP standards prior to the construction of the proposed compressor station\textsuperscript{8}. These communities are therefore especially vulnerable to the deleterious effects of further commercial infrastructure such as the proposed compressor station.

With this letter, we reach out to you to share our professional concerns on this matter, as physicians who care for residents of the South Shore of Boston. We are keenly aware of the personal impact of asthma flares, childhood cancers and pregnancy complications, and we desire a safe and healthy environment for our patients.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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www.physiciansforpolicyaction.org

References:

8. “Toxins detected in air near Fore River Basin, doctor says” Patriot Ledger May 31, 2017