



PHYSICIANS FOR POLICY ACTION

October 26, 2017

Senator Michael Barrett
Representative Thomas Golden
Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

Re: **H. 3391**, an act relative to the Energy Facilities Siting Board
H. 2698, an act protecting ratepayers from gas pipeline expansion costs
H. 3400, an act clarifying authority and responsibilities of the Department of Public Utilities

Dear Senator Barrett and Representative Golden:

We write to you in support of the above-referenced bills, currently before the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.

Physicians for Policy Action is a health advocacy group of more than 120 physicians, based at Harvard Medical School. Physicians for Social Responsibility is a medical and public health group working to reverse our trajectory toward climate change; PSR was the recipient of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize.

In 2015, the Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change warned that the health effects of climate change – such as severe weather events, the spread of disease vectors, and food insecurity – threaten to reverse the hard-won public health gains of the last century. As health care providers, we consider advocating for responses to climate change and a rapid transition to clean energy to be a professional responsibility.

Methane is a potent heat-trapping gas that makes a significant contribution to climate change. Furthermore, natural gas is a complex mixture of methane and toxic compounds, such as benzene, lead and particulate matter, that pose a threat to human health. People in our communities are exposed to these compounds through natural gas leaks from our aging infrastructure, as well as from routine releases from natural gas compressor stations. Because of these health concerns, the American Medical Association, the Massachusetts Medical Society, and the Massachusetts Nurses Association have passed resolutions supporting legislation to require comprehensive health impact assessments prior to the construction of natural gas infrastructure.

We cannot allow ratepayers in our communities to be charged for the expansion of natural gas pipelines that pose a health threat, particularly when Attorney General Maura Healey has ascertained that Massachusetts can meet our energy needs through energy conservation, energy efficiency, and increasing use of clean energy sources like solar and wind. We urge you to support the above-referenced legislation.

Sincerely,

Jim Recht, MD on behalf of Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility

Regina LaRocque, MD MPH on behalf of Physicians for Policy Action