



March 28, 2019

Governor Charlie Baker
% Office of Constituent Services
Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon St.
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) is an advocacy organization of more than 50,000 health professionals. Greater Boston PSR members are nationally-recognized experts in public health, cancer epidemiology, occupational medicine, environmental health, emergency medicine, disaster preparedness, and the health effects of climate change.

We are writing to inform you that Spectra-Enbridge's proposed siting of a 'natural' gas compressor station in Weymouth represents an immediate threat to the health of residents of the Fore River Basin (Quincy, Braintree, Weymouth and Hingham), as well as to the health of residents of greater Boston. The project also impedes the Commonwealth's ability to meet its mandated greenhouse gas reduction goals and consequently is a threat to all residents of Massachusetts. We urge you to direct your Office of Coastal Zone Management to refuse the permit for the project.

For more than two years, Greater Boston PSR has drawn attention to the serious health risks posed by the proposed compressor station. We have visited the site, met with local officials, participated in public meetings, written letters to the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Public Health, published a report, and met with Department of Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel¹. We summarize the threats here:

1. *Emergency response*. The proposed station will pressurize a flammable gas. Explosions and emergencies at compressor stations are common, and the Commonwealth recently experienced disastrous gas explosions in the Merrimack Valley. An emergency at the Fore River site would be particularly catastrophic, given the limited access and egress and the nearby sensitive facilities, including an MWRA sewage pumping station. The surrounding densely-populated community includes high numbers of children, the elderly and the disabled, making a timely evacuation nearly impossible.
2. *Climate change*. The health impacts of climate change are already being felt in Massachusetts and are projected to intensify in the future. The 2018 National Climate Assessment² reports that effects in the

¹ Available at <https://gbpsr.org/>

² <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

Northeast will include deaths, emergency room visits and hospitalizations, higher rates of infectious diseases, lower quality of life, and increased costs associated with healthcare utilization. Methane is responsible for an estimated 10% of greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts. Leaks and routine blowdowns of methane from the proposed compressor station will prevent the state from complying with its greenhouse gas reduction mandates outlined in the Global Warming Solutions Act.

3. *Health.* Particulate matter and toxic chemicals, such as benzene and formaldehyde, will be released from the facility during normal operations. There is no safe level of exposure to these chemicals, which will be carried by prevailing winds to the greater Boston area. Hazardous and cancer-causing substances, including arsenic, heavy metals and coal ash, will be released from the underlying heavily contaminated landfill³ during construction of the facility and during any emergency events at the site. These toxic chemicals are a threat to workers, emergency responders and residents and can spread to nearby Boston via air and via contamination of the adjacent bays.
4. *Health equity.* Two adjacent communities, Germantown and Quincy Point, are designated environmental justice areas⁴. Residents of the Fore River basin experience elevated levels of lung cancer, coronary artery disease and respiratory disease relative to the state average⁵. These elevated disease rates may relate to the existing heavy industrial development in their environment. We consider it unjust to site this polluting facility in the most impoverished and environmentally degraded area between Boston and Plymouth.

As physicians and health professionals, we join the Metropolitan Area Planning Council⁶, more than 20 state and national legislators⁷, and the mayors of Quincy, Weymouth and Braintree in opposing the construction of this compressor station in Weymouth. We call on you to protect the health of all Massachusetts residents by denying Spectra-Enbridge the coastal zone permit.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee of Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility

Matt Bivens, MD — *Board Chair*
John Belge, BSEE
Richard Clapp, MPH, DSc
Ira Helfand, MD
Amy Hendrickson
Joseph Hodgkin, MD
Martha Katz, MD
Regina LaRocque, MD, MPH
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³ Conditions Statement Report of Spectra-Enbridge:

<https://eeonline.eea.state.ma.us/EEA/fileviewer/Default.aspx?formdataid=0&documentid=478043>

⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/environmental-justice>

⁵ Fore River Health Impact Assessment: http://foreriverhia.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Final-Report_20190104.pdf

⁶ Public statement by MAPC:

http://foreriverhia.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/MAPC_Letter_NaturalGasCompressor-FINAL.pdf

⁷ <https://www.nocompressor.com/>