



**November 1, 2019 — Call to Governor Baker at the Massachusetts State House
Health Professionals Speak Out Against the Weymouth Compressor Station**

Statement of Dr. Regina LaRocque

I am Dr. Regina LaRocque. I have been a physician and a health researcher for more than 20 years. I am an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. I am also a member of the board of Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility.

For more than two years, GB PSR has drawn attention to the serious health and safety risks of the compressor station that Enbridge plans to build in Weymouth. We have visited the site, met with legislators, participated in public meetings, met with the leaders of state agencies, and written three comprehensive reports. We have asked to meet with you, Governor Baker, but you have not responded.

Our concerns about the health risks of natural gas infrastructure are shared by the Massachusetts Medical Society and by more than 100 municipal boards of health, which represent more than half the residents of Massachusetts. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which authored a health impact assessment of the proposed facility, opposes its construction.

Yet you, Governor Baker, are allowing the construction of this facility.

Governor Baker, we are here today to call on you to declare a public health emergency to halt the compressor station in Weymouth.

Let me tell you why.

Levels of benzene and formaldehyde measured in the Fore River Basin already exceed regulatory levels and pose an unacceptable cancer risk. **Governor Baker, you need to declare a public health emergency for the Fore River Basin.**

Rates of heart attack, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pediatric asthma, lung cancer, laryngeal cancer, leukemia and non-Hodgkins' lymphoma in the Fore River Basin are among the highest in the state. **Governor Baker, you need to declare a public health emergency for the Fore River Basin.**

Lung cancer incidence in Quincy Point and Germantown - two environmental justice communities adjacent to the proposed site -- is already 39% higher than the rest of the state. We don't know why. **Governor Baker, you need to declare a public health emergency for the Fore River Basin.**

There are already eight facilities in the Fore River Basin that have permits to emit air pollutants. If Enbridge's compressor station is sited in Weymouth, it will supersede all of these polluters and become the number one emitter of four air toxics - putting out 350 times more butadiene and 60 times more benzene the next largest source. **Governor Baker, you need to declare a public health emergency for the Fore River Basin.**

Soil at the site in Weymouth is contaminated with petroleum byproducts, coal ash, and heavy metals, including arsenic. Construction of Enbridge's compressor station will disrupt more than six football fields' worth of contaminated soil and threaten the nearby groundwater. Sea level rise, which is already occurring, will wash contaminated soil into the harbor and poison fish and humans. **Governor Baker, you need to declare a public health emergency for the Fore River Basin.**

Highly pressurized gas in Enbridge's compressor station could explode and burn in a catastrophic fashion. The zone around the compressor station is densely populated and includes children, the elderly and disabled residents. There is only one route of egress, and timely evacuation would be impossible. **Governor Baker, you need to declare a public health emergency for the Fore River Basin.**

Atmospheric methane from natural gas has spiked in recent years. Methane is 86 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide and it is driving climate change. 77 medical and public health organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, agree that the climate crisis is a health emergency. **Governor Baker, you need to declare the climate crisis a public health emergency for everyone in the Commonwealth.**

Enbridge's compressor station will export gas for sale overseas and will not benefit the residents of Massachusetts. It is a manifest threat to health and safety in our state. It is unjust. No regulatory threshold can make it safe.

We call on you, Governor Baker, to declare a public health emergency to protect Massachusetts residents from Enbridge's compressor station in Weymouth.