



December 5, 2024

The Honorable Paul Klein, Chair  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
c/o Allegheny County Council  
436 Grant Street, Room 119  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Chairman Klein:

Recently, the Committee on Health and Human Services held a public hearing and received comments from some residents related to the impact of natural gas development on public health. Many of these comments, as reported in local media, are misguided or simply inaccurate. On behalf of the Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC), I write to offer you and your colleagues additional information for consideration as it relates to natural gas development in Allegheny County.

The MSC, headquartered in Allegheny County, is a trade association that represents all facets of the unconventional natural gas industry. This includes those drilling and producing natural gas, gathering, processing and transporting it, and downstream users. Additionally, our members include many local businesses who provide goods, services and support to the industry, including air quality engineering firms, environmental engineering firms, construction, construction trades, legal and other professional services. Our members are proud of the contributions their work provides to both the local economy and environmental enhancements that Allegheny County has experienced.

### **Impact Fees to Allegheny County and its Municipalities**

Before addressing several of the substantive issues raised with the Committee, it is important to acknowledge one of the most significant and direct benefits that Allegheny County and its municipalities have seen thanks to shale gas development: the Act 13 Impact Fees.

Since 2012, Allegheny County government has received nearly \$20 million directly in Impact Fees, while its municipalities have received an additional \$10 million. In addition, state-administered competitive grants aimed at community enhancement have funded more than 190 projects totaling over \$24 million. Many of these projects are tied to community greenspace preservation, park and recreation improvements, hiking trails, water quality improvements and a variety of other uses that not only enhance the experience of living in Allegheny County, but help contribute to the health and well-being of its citizens. Simply put, these projects would not exist without safe and responsible shale gas development in Allegheny County.

## Public Health Impact Studies

The MSC and its member companies take seriously the obligation to operate safely and responsibly within their communities; after all, employees' own families live here too. Natural gas development is a highly regulated activity, with regulatory requirements in place across the entire spectrum of development. These include world-class standards for protecting air quality, surface and groundwater sources, and properly handling any waste products associated with development. I can think of no industry that undergoes greater scrutiny or more inspections than the shale gas industry.

The highly regulated nature of the industry, however, has not dissuaded those opposed to natural gas development from commissioning studies that, too often, are long on unfounded speculation and short on concrete findings. A recent example of this is the studies commissioned by former Governor Wolf and undertaken by the University of Pittsburgh. These studies – which included no field visits, discussions directly with industry operators, any original research, and demonstrated a jarring lack of understanding of how industry operates – sought to make broad assertions about correlations of public health circumstances with natural gas development. The lack of context surrounding these studies, combined with several questionable assumptions adopted by the researchers, understandably has led to public confusion and concern.

One area where this concern has manifested, and which was repeated during the Committee's public hearing, relates to occurrences of cancer, including lymphoma. Yet, even for all of its shortcomings, the Pitt study concluded, *"No evidence was found to support an association between exposures to [natural gas] activities and other environmental factors and the risk of leukemia, [central nervous system] tumors, and malignant bone tumors, including [Ewing's Family of Tumors]."*

With respect to lymphoma, the study had several obvious shortcomings, including:

- Assuming people did not move from their residence of birth over a period of several decades.
- Failing to consider smoking status, access and use of prenatal care, or any other genetic or lifestyle factors that experts know affect public health.
- Failing to identify the age of diagnosis or whether a date of diagnosis was associated with any known exposures.

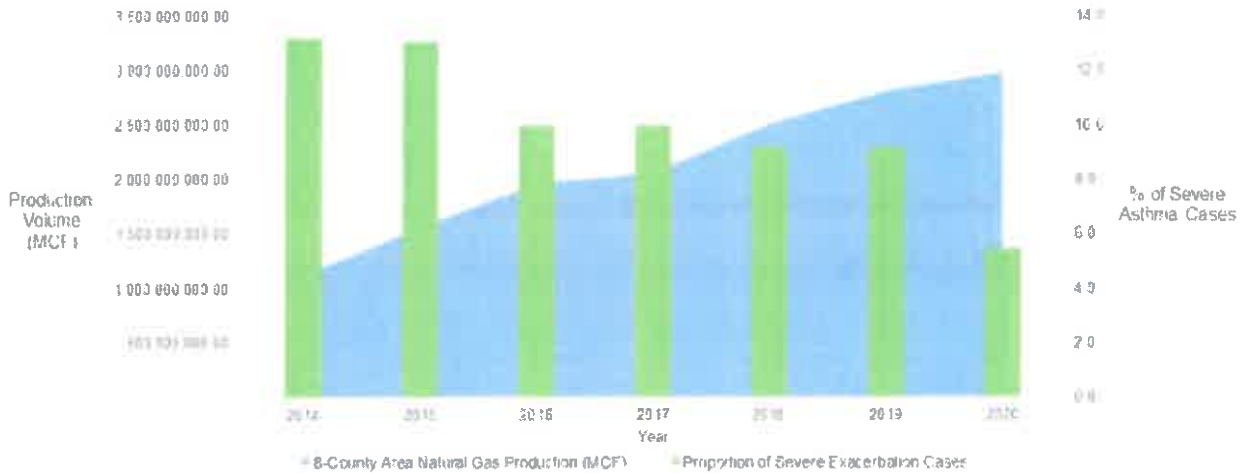
Even with these shortcomings, the researchers acknowledged that the estimated risk of lymphoma remains extremely low: 0.006% - 0.0084%.

Likewise, another assertion from the Pitt health studies related to occurrences of severe asthma among residents during the production phase of natural gas. Here, the shortcomings of the Pitt researchers were even more pronounced. In addition to deviating from what is commonly understood among health professionals as 'severe' asthma – and including occurrences of 'mild' and 'moderate' as severe cases – the assertions related to



asthma were still contradicted by actual empirical data. This data – buried in the Pitt reports but not carried in the accompanying headlines – showed that between 2014-2020 (the study period), severe asthma cases *declined by over 50%* despite a *200% increase* in natural gas production during the same time period.<sup>1</sup>

### 8-County Area Gas Production vs. Distribution of Severe Asthma Exacerbation Cases in Pitt Study, 2014-2020



### Air Quality Improvements

While more work remains to continue to improve air quality, even the Allegheny County Health Department has acknowledged the significant improvements that have been realized in the region – and across the Commonwealth – over the past two decades. Much of this progress is attributable to the increased use of natural gas for electric power generation.

Since 2005, volatile organic compounds are *down 47%*, nitrogen oxide emissions are *down 88%* and sulfur oxide emissions are *down 96%* within Pennsylvania’s electric power generation sector. Additionally, carbon emissions are *down 46%* during this same time period. These improvements are the equivalent of removing 12.5 million cars from the road.<sup>2</sup> Utilizing methodologies incorporated by both the PA Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, these reductions further equate to a public health benefit of between \$450 Billion - \$1.04 Trillion for Pennsylvania residents, including those in Allegheny County.

<sup>1</sup> More information responding to the University of Pittsburgh Health Impact Studies can be found online at <https://marcelluscoalition.org/resources/healthstudies/>. Chart constructed by MSC.

<sup>2</sup> 12.5 million cars equates to removing every vehicle from PA, CT, DE, MA, MD, NH, NJ, RI & VT combined.

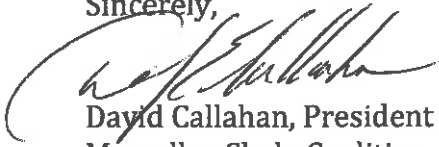


## Conclusion

Real, peer-reviewed and empirical research has shown that natural gas activity poses no significant threat to the health and safety of the communities in which we operate. The MSC has compiled a compendium of such research, and I invite you to review it by visiting <https://marcelluscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Health-Environmental-Impacts-Studies-1.pdf>.<sup>3</sup>

On behalf of the MSC, I appreciate your consideration of this information. The MSC and its member companies stand ready to be a resource for the Committee and Council.

Sincerely,



David Callahan, President  
Marcellus Shale Coalition

cc: John Fournier, County Manager

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<sup>3</sup> This and other Fact Sheets may be obtained by visiting [www.marcelluscoalition.org](http://www.marcelluscoalition.org) and clicking on "Resources" and "Fact Sheets".