

Dear Citizens Advisory Council,

November 6, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today. I am a wife, mother, and person of faith. I work for the Evangelical Environmental Network, who recently collected 36,391 signatures from Christians across Pennsylvania who are asking the DEP to implement a strong state implementation plan for the methane supplemental rule. These protections reflect an unprecedented commitment to pure air for our children to breathe, limiting the negative health impacts of methane and other toxics.

The signed petition begins, “As a Christian, I value the biblical commands to care for God’s creation, to love my neighbor, and to defend the vulnerable.” Similarly, our commonwealth’s [constitution](#) states, “The people have a right to clean air, pure water...”

These statements have one major thing in common: caring for the health and wellbeing of our children. Living and going to school within a half mile threat radius (newer research shows as much as 5 to 10 miles) of oil and gas infrastructure is associated with negative health outcomes like respiratory and heart diseases and increased exposure to known cancer causing¹ chemicals. Methane is also responsible for 25% of the human-produced warming we experience today. With rising temperatures come increased smog and associated asthma attacks and increased cases of vector-borne diseases like Lyme Disease.²

I have recently learned that there was a well leaking within a mile of our home when my children were younger. My youngest daughter went to preschool a couple of blocks away from this well from the time she was an infant until she was 3 years old. During the years my children were learning to walk, talk, read and write, they were living and/or going to daycare near this leaking well. Was the health of my children impacted because of exposure during their formative years?

Also, my husband and I are the sandwich generation. In the last few years, we have also taken care of our aging parents. Recently, I got a phone call from my mother-in-law saying she wasn’t feeling well and that she had called her doctor, who had told her to dial 911. She was having difficulty breathing and chest pains. We rushed to the emergency room and she was admitted to the hospital for a couple of days. After lots of testing, it was determined that she was, thankfully, not having a heart attack and didn’t have pneumonia. What they discovered instead was that this 82 year old woman—who has never had an allergy in her life—was having an allergic reaction. The diagnosis by the doctors at the hospital was that her allergic reaction was due to the fact that she now lives in an area of the commonwealth that is heavily polluted by fossil fuel emissions. This frightening experience is unfortunately not unique to our family. Various health risks are associated with exposure to methane and associated toxics, including worsening asthma and [respiratory](#) disease, higher risk of cardiac diseases, increase the risk of [cancer](#), as well as birth defects, preterm births and low birth weight in newly born babies. However by implementing methane reduction policies, the state can ensure less families experience a pollution-fueled health scare like we did, while also reducing healthcare costs and improving overall public health outcomes.

¹ <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.7b05983>

² https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/21/8/14-1878_article

When Governor Shapiro served as Attorney General, he investigated the impact of the oil and gas industry on the residents of Pennsylvania. The report concludes that, “The risks of this ... industry should fall on the industry and the regulatory agencies, not on the public. As we see it, the purpose of government agencies like DEP and DOH is to proactively prevent harm, not to wait and see if the worst really happens. “

Medical research is clear: stronger methane safeguards are critical for defending children’s health and ensuring a safer climate future. Fortunately, there are actions the DEP can take now to defend the health of children and families like mine by rolling out the strongest possible state implementation plan for the methane standard and ensuring these safeguards are fully put into place. Our commonwealth is the second-largest fossil fuel producer in the nation, meaning we have a big responsibility to act on pollution from the oil and gas sector in order to defend the health of our residents. The Department of Environmental Protection must step in to put into place these safeguards and defend the over 200,000 students who attend more than 950 schools within a half mile of oil and gas facilities.

I urge you to take seriously the words of the more than 36,000 Pennsylvanian Christians who say, “I am concerned about wasteful methane emissions and toxic pollution that risk Pennsylvanians' health, contribute to climate change, and waste our natural resources. Now that the EPA has finalized new standards for methane emissions from new and existing sources, it's time to start designing a strong state implementation plan (SIP) that benefits Pennsylvania.” These signers agree with the more than [60% of Pennsylvanians](#) who want methane regulations for oil and gas. Listening to these Pennsylvanians will reduce pollution and help create a cleaner economy. But most importantly, it will ensure more parents like me don't have to wonder whether where their children live, learn and play is safe for them.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kim Anderson".

Kim Anderson
Director of Member Mobilization
Evangelical Environmental Network