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**House of Representatives**  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

August 16, 2019

Allegheny County Board of Health  
c/o Allegheny County Health Department  
542 Fourth Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

RE: Merrion Oil and Gas

Members of the Board of Health,

The fracking well proposed at the Edgar Thomson Steel mill would endanger the public health and public safety of much of my district. Allegheny County Health Department must protect the residents of the Mon Valley from this dangerous proposal.

The current proposal by Merrion Oil and Gas is to build an unconventional wellsite on 10 acres of property owned by U.S. Steel that spans multiple Environmental Justice communities in the Mon-Valley. These neighborhoods are already plagued by decades of violative industry practices that have caused some of the highest childhood asthma rates in the country, according to numerous medical reports. Fracking would present an additional environmental stressor for these communities to deal with. Studies have shown that pregnant women living near fracking wells are more likely to have high-risk pregnancies and are more likely to give birth to babies with congenital heart defects<sup>1</sup>. Communities living with fracking and fracking infrastructure in the counties surrounding Allegheny County are in crisis as dozens of children have been diagnosed with rare forms of cancer, including Ewing sarcoma and others.

This proposal would be the most urban setting that we have ever seen for a fracking well in Pennsylvania, exacerbating the aforementioned health effects.

Merrion Oil and Gas has never drilled an unconventional fracking well in Pennsylvania. Their lack of experience has shown already in their failure to submit appropriate paperwork to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). First, Merrion submitted the wrong type of permit to DEP. When Merrion then filed the correct form, they failed to provide an

<sup>1</sup> Lisa M. McKenzie, William Allshouse, Stephen Daniels. **Congenital heart defects and intensity of oil and gas well site activities in early pregnancy.** *Environment International*, 2019.

emergency response plan. Unfortunately, this type of negligence is not unprecedented for residents of this community. We, however, will not be complacent with this egregious additional health hazard.

This project requires a New Source Review and/or modification to U.S. Steel's current Title V permit. We understand that ACHD has criteria and exemptions in place when it comes to typical fracking projects, however, this situation is not typical. Merrion Oil and Gas has proposed building an unconventional well pad that would share property, as well as important infrastructure, with U.S. Steel's Edgar Thomson Mill. This project will directly source U.S. Steel with natural gas for operations and modify existing operations. As you are aware, Edgar Thomson Mill is already defined as a "Major Source" pollution site for the Mon-Valley region and requires Title V permitting.

My constituents and I believe that this triggers the need for an installation permit as a modification for a major source as outlined in §2102.05 INSTALLATION PERMITS FOR NEW AND MODIFIED MAJOR SOURCES as well as a New Source Review. This is in line with the EPA's 2009 NSR Aggregation Action and should be reviewed as such.

To date, we have seen no information or documentation from ACHD that states otherwise. Neither U.S. Steel nor Merrion Oil and Gas have produced studies demonstrating that the emissions from this new source would not reach the threshold for permitting, allowing for exemption from these processes.

We believe that a responsible health department would assert its responsibility in regulating air quality in Allegheny County by classifying this proposed fracking well as a modification of U.S. Steel's Edgar Thomson facility. Furthermore, we believe that a responsible health department would deny such a modification. The U.S. Steel Edgar Thomson facility has been in noncompliance with its air permits for over a decade. At this and other facilities, most notably the Clairton Coke Works, U.S. Steel has demonstrated an inability to respect Allegheny County residents' right to breath. This infrastructure is already in violation of air pollution laws prior to the installation of a fracking well. ACHD must reject this proposed modification.

ACHD must require Merrion to go through the permitting process described above. Assert this responsibility immediately or provide an explanation to me and my constituents as to why you are failing to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Summer Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Summer Lee, Representative  
34<sup>th</sup> Legislative District