

Press Release

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**EHP Hosts Legislative Breakfast in Harrisburg Launching White Paper:
“Pennsylvania’s Shale Gas Boom: How Policy Decisions Failed to Protect
Public Health and What We Can Do to Correct It”**

HARRISBURG, PA, April 13, 2022 – Today, the Environmental Health Project (EHP) hosted a legislative breakfast at the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg for members of the legislative and executive branches of Pennsylvania government. The event was held from 8:30 to 10 a.m. in Room G50 of the K. Leroy Irvis Office Building. Rep. Sara Innamorato (District 21-Allegheny County) offered opening remarks.

The event marked the launch of a comprehensive new white paper titled **Pennsylvania’s Shale Gas Boom: How Policy Decisions Failed to Protect Public Health and What We Can Do to Correct It**. The white paper reflects EHP’s 10 years of focused and ongoing research, investigations, and interaction with frontline communities.

“We can agree that all Pennsylvanians should have the opportunity to thrive and lead healthy, fulfilling lives,” said EHP Executive Director **Alison L. Steele**, who presented the white paper at the event. “This paper presents a framework for how to support that kind of approach to policymaking—one that ensures public health considerations are part of the decision-making process around shale gas development.”

The white paper is the culmination of more than 1,000 hours of research, interviews, writing, and fact checking—all of which yielded some worrying conclusions.

“It became clear from the start that policymakers in Pennsylvania state government had not considered the health impacts of this extractive industry,” said **Beth Weinberger**, EHP’s director of research and policy and the primary researcher and writer of the paper. “There’s a common misconception that existing regulations are health-protective standards, and that as long as an operator is in compliance with regulations, there is no health risk. That just isn’t true.”

The white paper also indicated an ongoing disconnect between research studies and how Pennsylvania policymakers have allowed the industry to operate.

“There’s a major gap between research on the health impacts of shale gas development and the state of policies that govern it,” said **Makenzie White**, EHP’s public health manager. “Reliable, peer-reviewed epidemiological studies have consistently shown connections between living near shale gas development and a host of health concerns, including asthmas, heart disease, and maternal and child health issues, among others. Long-term exposure to toxic substances and radiation may create impacts further down the road.”

While prior policy around shale gas development has failed to adequately address public health, the white paper stresses that there is hope for the future.

“In the past, the promise of economic benefits overshadowed the caution over health impacts,” said **Alison L. Steele**. “But it doesn’t have to be that way. There are definitive steps Pennsylvania’s state government can take to ensure equity, transparency, authority, and accountability with respect to shale gas development. That’s why we’re here today. To begin the process of changing the way Pennsylvania’s policymakers think about public health when weighing it against this extractive industry.”

The full white paper, as well as an executive summary and policy recommendations poster, are available at: <https://www.environmentalhealthproject.org/white-paper>

All speakers are available for interviews following the event. To request an interview, please contact EHP’s communication manager, Scott Smith: ssmith@environmentalhealthproject.org, 412-600-0738.

About the Environmental Health Project

The [Environmental Health Project](https://www.environmentalhealthproject.org) (EHP) is a nonprofit public health organization that defends public health in the face of shale gas development. Now in our 10th year, we provide frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation, and guidance. We engage diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, public servants, and others. We do so because knowledge protects health.