

STATEMENT FROM BASSETT MEDICAL CENTER BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees of Bassett Medical Center, based in Cooperstown, New York, at the headwaters of the Susquehanna River, is deeply concerned about the consequences of hydrofracking on the long-term safety of the water supply within the region served by Bassett.

The Board is aware of the Executive Order through May of 2011 that provides for a more limited moratorium through July 1, 2011, which was affirmed by Governor Cuomo. The Board views the issue of hydrofracking as a public health issue of the highest priority.

From a public health perspective, there have historically been few higher priorities than ensuring the safety of water supplies in New York State. The Department of Health oversees the delivery of drinking water and is charged with the responsibility of assuring water sources are adequately protected. The Public Health Council of New York State was founded in 1913 to ensure that there would be careful monitoring and regulation of public water supplies in the state. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection has taken the position that hydraulic fracturing to recover natural gas poses unacceptable risks to the water supply and has asked the state Department of Environmental Conservation to prohibit natural gas drilling in the NYC watershed. The Susquehanna River watershed warrants the same consideration that assures protection for its aquifers and surface resources.

While the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regulates natural gas development in New York, the historic responsibility to preserve the safety of the water has resided in the purview of the Department of Health (DOH). For this reason, the Board of Trustees of Bassett Medical Center supports DOH's continued involvement and attention to the public health concerns that have been raised, including possible contamination of the water supply.

As DOH and DEC work to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the risks to the watershed and the health of the public, it is paramount that these concerns be addressed in the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement. These findings must be incorporated into the regulations for hydrofracking that are currently under development by the Department of Environmental Conservation. All information from these sources, as well as the study currently underway by Environmental Protection Agency should be made available for public scrutiny and discussion prior to the initiation of hydrofracking in the Susquehanna River watershed.

Board of Trustees of Bassett Medical
Center