



## **Protecting the future of the Catskills**

TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW STATE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING  
ON 2013-2014 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL:  
TOPIC "HEALTH/MEDICAID"

January 30, 2013

I am a Board-certified pediatrician with fellowship level training in epidemiology and research design and have published my work in numerous medical journals, including the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the *American Journal of Public Health*, and *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Pediatric Association. I work as an independent bioethics consultant and currently serve as Regional Director for the High Peaks for Catskill Mountainkeeper.

Focusing on health as addressed in the proposed executive budget, I see a glaring omission: no funding proposed to conduct a comprehensive Health Impacts Assessment as a means to guide decisionmaking about whether to allow High Volume Horizontal Fracturing (fracking) in New York State and as a necessary preliminary to the work of the Department of Environmental Conservation in completing its SEQRA review of fracking and then, if warranted, drafting regulations and permit conditions.

Because the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York State Department of Health have not yet conducted a comprehensive Health Impacts Assessment (HIA) as part of their review and because these agencies have declined to plan for the inclusion of a HIA in their future work, Catskill Mountainkeeper requests the members of the New York State Legislature to place funds in the budget of \$250,000 for such a study. By providing funding for a comprehensive HIA on fracking, the Legislature will provide guidance and oversight to the involved agencies, steering New York State in the direction of a rigorous, science-based, open, transparent, and participatory process for evaluating the health impacts of fracking on New York's citizens. The state of Maryland recently decided to put fracking plans on hold while conducting a \$1.5 million study of economic and health impacts, and we believe that New York deserves, at a minimum, a smaller scale version of such an analysis, which we believe can be conducted at less expense with independent in-state experts.

We also request that the Legislature amend the budget to provide funding for a financial audit of the additional health and public health expenditures expected to accompany the introduction of fracking activities in New York State, along with a fiscal analysis of the best methods available to generate income from fracking's activities in order to cover such costs.

  
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Regional Director for the High Peaks

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