



## **State Senator Nickie J. Antonio - District 23**

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

March 25, 2025

Sponsor Testimony S.B. 132

Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 132, the PRESERVE Act.

Standing for: the Protecting public Resources, Ecosystems, and Sensitive lands from Extraction, Violation, and Exploitation Act, this bill seeks to ban the horizontal chemical extraction process of oil or gas from under Ohio's state parks and public lands.

Explosions, fires, and accidents at numerous fracking sites have caused irreparable damage to our state's environment, local parks, and communities. Just earlier this year, an explosion erupted at a hydraulic fracturing well pad near Salt Fork State Park, causing emergency personnel to shut down State Route 22 and evacuate nearby residents to safety.<sup>1</sup> While wildlife and water sources were reported to not be impacted by this explosion, it highlights the necessity of abolishing the practice within Ohio state parks. According to Save Ohio Parks, an environmental advocacy group working to stop fracking in Ohio parks, the site of the explosion was a seven-minute drive from the park's entrance.

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<sup>1</sup> Renee Rox, "Thursday Fire at fracking well pad explosion near Salt Fork State Park burns out on Friday", *WOSU*, January 3rd, 2025, <https://www.wosu.org/2025-01-03/thursday-fire-at-fracking-well-pad-explosion-at-salt-fork-state-park-burns-out-on-friday>.

The group's spokesperson, Melinda Zemper, cited an [analysis by FracTracker Alliance](#), that states Ohio has experienced 1,400 "incidents" related to oil and gas operations over the past five years, "one every 1.5 days—including fires, explosions, gas releases, loss of well control, transportation accidents..."

"It is not a matter of if, but when, a disaster will strike fracking operations near an Ohio state park, wildlife area, or other public land," Zemper stated.

Our state parks and public lands are vital for preserving biodiversity, offering recreational opportunities, and supporting tourism, which is a key driver of local economies. Fracking can disrupt these ecosystems, with the potential to cause irreversible damage to habitats and diminishing the long-term viability of our natural resources. There are numerous, serious health conditions documented that can arise from fracking including cancer, gastrointestinal, developmental, and neurological disorders.<sup>2</sup> This proposed law will not just help our environment, but will help to save lives as these diseases can be prevented.

Oil wells for fracking are also typically located in close proximity to vulnerable populations, making them more susceptible to harm.<sup>3</sup> In 2016, a study conducted by the Environment Ohio Research and Policy Center, Frontier Group, and FracTracker Alliance, found that out of nine states studied, including Ohio, fracking sites are located near schools, nursing homes, hospitals, and day cares.<sup>4</sup> These sites are often built in rural and underrepresented areas, where resources, capital, and personnel for emergency responses are spread thin. The health effects of fracking have also been linked to increases in school absences, hospital visits, and premature deaths, putting more pressure on our families and healthcare systems.<sup>5</sup> It is our duty to protect all Ohioans, especially those who are unable to protect themselves against a potential danger.

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<sup>2</sup> "Public Health and Fracking", *Alliance for Nurses for Healthy Environment*, <https://envirn.org/energy-and-health/public-health-and-fracking/#:~:text=Fracking%20chemicals%20are%20linked%20to,chemical%20carcinogens%20and%20their%20precursors>

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Ridlington, Rachel Richardson, and Kyle Ferrar, "Dangerous and Close: Fracking Puts the Nation's Most Vulnerable People at Risk", *Environment Ohio Research and Policy Center, Frontier Group, FracTracker Alliance*, Fall 2016, [https://environmentamerica.org/ohio/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/OH\\_dangerous\\_scrn.pdf](https://environmentamerica.org/ohio/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/OH_dangerous_scrn.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Last month, the federal government fired around 1,000 national park workers that oversee the care and maintenance of 433 parks across the country.<sup>6</sup> By having essential personnel terminated from the National Park Service, this puts our parks, climate, and ecosystems in jeopardy, demonstrating Ohio's needed role in taking preventative steps to preserve and protect our environment.

Thank you Chair Schaffer and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee for allowing me to speak today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>6</sup> Kylie Mohr, "Trump administration ignores courts, continues dismantling National Park Service workforce", SFGATE, March 19th, 2025,  
<https://www.sfgate.com/national-parks/article/trump-still-dismantling-national-park-workforce-20230343.php>