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**Committees:**

- Finance – *Ranking Minority Member*
- Agriculture
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Finance – General Government & Agency Review Subcommittee
- Government Oversight and Reform
- Judiciary

**Before the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee**  
**Senate Bill 50 – Statewide Brine-Injection Well Ban**  
**Sponsor Testimony by Senator Michael J. Skindell**  
**February 22, 2017**

Chairman Balderson, Vice Chair Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on SB 50. I introduced this legislation in the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly as SB 47 as well as in the 130<sup>th</sup> General Assembly as SB 178. This legislation specifically prohibits injecting brine or other waste substances resulting from, obtained from or produced in connection with oil or gas drilling, exploration, or production into an underground formation. It also prohibits the Chief of the Division of Oil & Gas Resources from issuing a permit for such practices. There are serious concerns to be addressed regarding the toxic hydraulic fracturing waste being injected into the ground.

The toxic chemicals used in these injection wells are said to include radioactive materials from the shale, as well as chemicals from the initial fracking process. These chemicals can flow into underground waters and seep into water aquifers contaminating it and causing harm to nearby wildlife and residents.<sup>1</sup> Records show that wells drilled to bury this waste have repeatedly leaked, allowing these chemicals to flow into the underground.<sup>2</sup>

The large amount of oil and natural gas drilling in Ohio and neighboring states has raised important questions about the lasting effects of this waste. Regulations currently lag behind the speed at which the toxic waste is produced, causing much uncertainty for the well-being and safety of the people and wildlife. As more and more wells are being created and used, there have been a series of small earthquakes<sup>3</sup>. These too, raise questions as to the safety of injection wells.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://catskillcitizens.org/learnmore/OHIO\\_FACT\\_SHEET\\_6-10-13.pdf](http://catskillcitizens.org/learnmore/OHIO_FACT_SHEET_6-10-13.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/29/us/wastewater-disposal-wells-proliferate-along-with-fracking.html>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2012/03/shale\\_gas\\_drilling\\_caused\\_smal.html](http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2012/03/shale_gas_drilling_caused_smal.html)

Ohio takes more than half of Pennsylvania's waste material, indicating at least 19 million cubic feet of solid material, which could potentially be sent to Ohio for disposal.<sup>4</sup> Fracking waste is also coming into Ohio from West Virginia. Reports from the US Geological Survey showed that waste imported to Ohio for disposal from Pennsylvania contained radium-226, a radioactive material that is potentially fatal.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, recent sampling results from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources found alarming levels of environmental toxins at Class II injection well sites in Ohio, including high levels of benzene, a known carcinogen.<sup>6</sup> Despite these studies, the full extent of the public health threat from fracking waste remains unknown.

This bill would ban Class II injection wells, stopping the potentially harmful effects on our state. Current regulations are simply not enough to protect the people from the toxic chemicals being dumped underground on a daily basis.

Chairman Balderson, Vice Chair Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I would be happy to answer any questions relating to this matter.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://catskillcitizens.org/learnmore/OHIO\\_FACT\\_SHEET\\_6-10-13.pdf](http://catskillcitizens.org/learnmore/OHIO_FACT_SHEET_6-10-13.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/27/us/27gas.html>

<sup>6</sup> [http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/amall/state\\_oil\\_and\\_gas\\_inspections.html](http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/amall/state_oil_and_gas_inspections.html)