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AND REFORM

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

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February 2, 2022

Deputy Administrator Tristan Brown
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Deputy Administrator Brown:

As the federal representative for the Eighth Congressional District of Massachusetts, I write you in strong opposition to the continued operation of the Weymouth Compressor Station, located in the Town of Weymouth, Massachusetts. In particular, I urge the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to exercise its regulatory enforcement authority in the area of pipeline safety and immediately terminate operation of this dangerous project.

On January 20, 2022, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Chairman Richard Glick acknowledged that FERC “likely erred in siting the Weymouth Compressor Station where it did” — namely, in a densely populated area encompassing two state-designated environmental justice communities that have already “borne a disproportionate burden from a legacy of industrial activity, including elevated rates of asthma, certain cancers, and other serious illnesses.”¹

I strongly agree with this assessment.

Since the initial proposal of the Weymouth Compressor Station project in 2015, I have repeatedly underscored to federal energy regulators and pipeline safety officials the serious threats to public health and safety presented by the operation of a 7,700-horsepower compressor station in a flood-prone area that is adjacent to high-traffic infrastructure, such as the Fore River Bridge and Route 3A; that is within two miles of schools attended by more than 3,000 students, nursing homes, a mental health facility, and the New England Aquarium’s Animal Care Center—home to one of the largest sea turtle rescue operations in the country; and that is in

¹ “Chairman Glick Statement on Weymouth Compressor Station.” Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 20 Jan. 2022, <https://www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/chairman-glick-statement-weymouth-compressor-station>.

proximity to critical infrastructure and thousands of households throughout the Town of Weymouth, the Town of Abington, the Town of Braintree, and the City of Quincy.²

Furthermore, the Weymouth Compressor Station is located within a half-mile of two environmental justice communities that have endured high levels of toxic air pollution for decades. Residents of the Fore River Basin, for example, have experienced a high prevalence of lung disease and pediatric asthma. Meanwhile, the residents of Quincy, Braintree, and Weymouth are demonstrating increased hospital admission rates for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease associated with long-term exposure to irritating gases and particulate matter.³

Additionally, as evidenced by the January 27, 2022, notification sent by the pipeline operator, Enbridge, to the Town of Weymouth, readiness testing and maintenance of the Weymouth facility also regularly expose the Town and its surrounding communities to extended “offsite sound impacts,” or noise pollution.⁴

Regrettably, recent emergency events at the Weymouth Compressor Station have more than validated the health and safety concerns that South Shore residents, community safety groups, non-profit organizations, and local, state, and federal officials have expressed for nearly seven years. Between 2020 and 2021, the Weymouth Compressor Station experienced four unplanned emergency shutdowns and multiple blowdown events necessitating the release of natural gas into the atmosphere — all amid the global COVID-19 pandemic.⁵

In his recent statement, Chairman Glick urged PHMSA to “keep a watchful eye on the facility and use the full extent of its jurisdiction to protect the residents of Weymouth.”⁶ To this end, I strongly urge your agency to fully exercise its regulatory enforcement authority and immediately terminate operation of the Weymouth Compressor Station. Specifically, Title 49, Part 190 of the Code of Federal Regulations authorizes PHMSA to issue an emergency order to abate an “imminent hazard.” Federal pipeline safety regulations define “imminent hazard” as:

² Wasser, Miriam. “The Controversial Natural Gas Compressor in Weymouth, Explained.” WBUR News, WBUR, 13 Oct. 2020, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2020/10/13/weymouth-compressor-explainer-climate-change-enbridge-natural-gas-fracking>.

³ Ortiz, Aimee. “In Weymouth, Echoes of Flint.” BostonGlobe.com, The Boston Globe, 23 May 2019, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2019/05/23/weymouth-echoes-flint/1ksKThEGt03z7haMV7jTgJ/story.html>.

⁴ Town of Weymouth, Massachusetts, *News*, (online at <https://www.weymouth.ma.us/home/urgent-alerts/notification-of-anticipated-sound-impacts>) (accessed on Jan. 31, 2022).

⁵ Trufant, Jessica. “Weymouth Compressor Station Goes Offline for Fourth Time.” The Patriot Ledger, The Patriot Ledger, 21 May 2021, <https://www.patriotledger.com/story/news/2021/05/21/weymouth-compressor-station-goes-offline-fourth-time/5203251001/>.

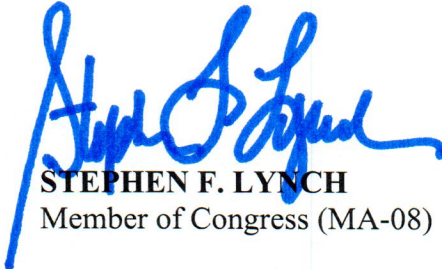
⁶ “Chairman Glick Statement on Weymouth Compressor Station.” Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 20 Jan. 2022, <https://www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/chairman-glick-statement-weymouth-compressor-station>.

the existence of a condition relating to a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline facility that presents a substantial likelihood that death, serious illness, severe personal injury, or a substantial endangerment to health, property, or the environment may occur before the reasonably foreseeable completion date of a formal proceeding begun to lessen the risk of such death, illness, injury, or endangerment.⁷

Clearly, the Weymouth Compressor Station falls within this regulatory definition and necessitates emergency action by PHMSA. In Congress, I have introduced H.R. 309, the ***Pipeline and Compressor Safety Verification Act***, to revoke the certificate of public convenience and necessity issued for the facility unless state public safety and fire officials certify that it does not pose a danger to surrounding residential communities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress (MA-08)

cc: The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation

⁷ 49 U.S.C. § 190.3.