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Contact: Shannon Gearhart, MD, MPH, Physicians for Social Responsibility/New York

Email: shannon.gearhart@gmail.com

Cell: [\(317\) 432-3913](tel:(317)432-3913)

Press Release

Medical and Disaster Experts Investigate Pipeline Construction Next to Indian Point Nuclear Plant: Prompts Strong Call to Immediately Halt Pipeline Construction and Operation

Buchanan, NY - With a sense of utmost urgency, health care professionals, nuclear and disaster experts, public officials and members of the public had a first hand look this morning at the dangerous siting of the 42 inch diameter, high pressure Spectra AIM gas pipeline only 105 feet from vital structures at the aging Indian Point nuclear power plant located near two major earthquake fault lines in the most densely populated region in the nation. The pipeline construction which is nearing completion is targeted for operation on November 1st further heightening experts' warnings and deep concerns regarding the unacceptable risk the pipeline poses to more than 20 million people in the region and the imperative to immediately halt construction and operation of the pipeline project to avert a potential nuclear disaster. The tour and press conference, hosted by Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), a national organization comprised of medical professionals, that has been advocating for public health and safety for over 50 years, featured Dr. Irwin Redlener, Director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Earth Institute at Columbia University and Paul Blanch, a nuclear power expert.

Leading nuclear and pipeline safety experts have repeatedly warned that a pipeline rupture at Indian Point could result in catastrophic nuclear releases worse than the Fukushima nuclear disaster endangering millions of people throughout the New York tri-state area who live within the 50-mile impact radius. Numerous documents in the record submitted by safety experts to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and other state and federal agencies reflect serious concerns regarding the lack of pipeline thermodynamics expertise and the complete absence of comprehensive independent risk, health and safety assessments of the co-location of these two major hazardous sites despite repeated urgent calls for such evaluations before any consideration of approval of the pipeline project. Serious concerns have also been raised about the considerable national security implications of the vulnerability of multiple, proximate sources of critical power infrastructure. However, FERC disregarded all of those concerns and requests and granted approval for the project in March 2015 allowing construction to begin in October 2015. The unacceptable risk to New York's vast population compounded by the total lack of emergency protocols, safety training and preparedness, evacuation plans and public education in emergency scenarios have prompted public officials on local, state, and federal levels to join health and safety experts and the public in their demand for FERC to immediately halt construction and operation of the Spectra AIM pipeline.

Requests by safety experts and public officials for emergency protocols and safety preparedness indicate no evidence of planning for a pipeline rupture or explosion adjacent to the nuclear plant. The lack of emergency training and preparedness reflects the lack of recognition of the safety experts' concerns regarding the perilous impact of a pipeline accident at that location and the imminent and permanent danger the AIM pipeline poses to the nuclear plant and the entire New York metropolitan area. Data from the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline Hazardous Material Safety Administration (PHMSA) confirms that pipeline accidents are commonplace and have been significantly increasing in frequency in recent years including in newly constructed pipelines. There were 143 gas transmission line accidents in 2015.

Major concerns regarding lack of health and safety assessments, emergency procedures, training and preparedness before pipeline project approvals are considered have been echoed by other health professionals, public officials and emergency first responders in other regions across the Spectra AIM pipeline route in New England and for other pipeline projects across the United States. In West Roxbury, a frontline community in

the City of Boston, the Spectra AIM pipeline is sited dangerously close to a stone quarry. With that in mind, Massachusetts Health Care Providers Against Fracked Gas recently issued a strong call for an immediate moratorium on new major gas pipeline infrastructure projects in Massachusetts until a rigorous Health Impact Assessment is conducted which fully addresses the impacts of these pipeline infrastructure projects on public health. They join other organizations including Physicians for Social Responsibility, the American Medical Association, the Medical Society of the State of New York and others that have already acknowledged the hazards of natural gas infrastructure and associated adverse health impacts and have requested health and safety assessments before decisions are made regarding pipeline infrastructure projects. Health and safety experts agree that these projects should be put on hold and not proceed until these crucial independent assessments are conducted and impacts are fully addressed.

Dr. Irwin Redlener, Director, National Center of Disaster Preparedness and Professor of Health Policy and Management at Columbia University said, "Given the population density surrounding the Indian Point nuclear facilities and the potential catastrophic consequences of a major disaster from the installation or malfunction of the AIM pipeline, it is imperative that these plans be aborted now. To make matters worse, plans to repair a developing problem in the pipeline and plans to safely evacuate at risk populations are entirely inadequate. From a public health point of view, this project should not be allowed to proceed."

Paul Blanch, a nuclear power expert stated, "The NRC has underestimated the probability of a gas line accident impacting the Indian Point nuclear plant by at least a factor of 1000. Moreover, the NRC and Entergy have failed to provide any supportable documentation that Indian Point can safely shut down the plants in the event of a gas line rupture, and Entergy has no emergency procedures in place at Indian Point to respond to a gas line rupture. The blast radius from a gas line rupture would likely encompass the entire Indian Point site, disabling all vital equipment required to prevent core damage and major radioactive releases to the environment." Mr. Blanch continued, "It is my expert opinion that once gas is introduced into the AIM pipeline there will be a grave and imminent danger to the surrounding area and residents. The consequences of a nuclear event at Indian Point may impact millions of lives in the Hudson Valley and New York City and cause social and economic impacts in the trillions of dollars range."

"As a New York-based public health physician and on behalf of my patients and their communities, I call on Governor Cuomo, Senators Schumer and Gilibrand, Congress members Lowey and Engel, and other elected officials to urge President Obama and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to halt the construction and upcoming operation of the AIM pipeline. With the significant risks amplified by the construction of the high-pressure AIM pipeline nearby the already dangerous and aged Indian Point nuclear power plant, the time to act is NOW. We need to think proactively and prevent any potential disaster that will have significant public health, safety and environmental consequences to the millions of people living in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut – both now and into the future," said Dr. Shannon Gearhart, Past-president, Physicians for Social Responsibility/New York.

"Spectra must address the issue of the radioactive decay products, which accumulate in the pipeline, and how they plan to handle and dispose of this radioactive waste," said Paul Moskowitz, P.E., Ph.D. in Nuclear Physics.

"I live five hundred feet from the old pipeline route and my daughter's elementary school sits four hundred feet from the new pipeline route, well within the official impact radius, so my family are impacted residents," said Erik Lindberg, a Westchester resident. "We are asked to accept increased yearly emissions of pollutants from valves and compressor stations, and the ever present risk of leaks or catastrophic failures. If you live within fifty miles of Indian Point, you too are an impacted resident, because the pipeline runs close to safety infrastructure at the plant. New York has banned fracking, but we still face the threat of fracked gas infrastructure in our communities. This project is an unacceptable risk to all of us."

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