

NEWS RELEASE

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State Rep. Joe Hohenstein
D-Phila.

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Hohenstein announces news conference, joins voices condemning Philadelphia LNG Natural Gas Export Task Force

HARRISBURG, April 19 – State Rep. Joe Hohenstein, D-Phila., today announced his plans to host a news conference at the Courtyard Philadelphia South at The Navy Yard, Wisconsin Room, 1001 Intrepid Ave., Philadelphia, PA, 19112 at **9:30 a.m. Thursday, April 20**. This news conference is to shed light on the recent shutout of public comment and organizations focused on community and public safety for the Philadelphia LNG Natural Gas Export Task Force meeting at 10 a.m. that day.

“The people’s business should be conducted out in the open, with transparency and honest debate. The chair of the Task Force went back on her word to provide space for people from the community to testify and to run the task force openly. Those voices will not be silenced and we will not stand for public debate being managed in the shadows,” Hohenstein said. “We are at our best when we acknowledge our differing opinions and debate them in an open forum. Representative White said she was going to do that and then silenced four witnesses from community and environmental perspectives. We deserve a government that listens to the people. This task force will not provide any useful recommendations as it is currently configured and operated.”

The four individuals who were shut out of the Task Force meeting were **Zulene Mayfield, chairperson of [Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living \(CRCQL\)](#); Fred Millar, a national policy analyst recommended by the [Delaware Riverkeeper Network](#); Tom Schuster, Director of the [Sierra Club Pa. Chapter](#); and Fermin Morales, union electrician for IBEW local 98, community activist, and member of [Philly Boricuas](#), a community group representing northern Philadelphia and Puerto Rican neighborhoods on community safety and LNG transportation issues.**

“The complete shutout by this Task Force of the very communities who would be most impacted by risks to their safety and the pollution from LNG export facilities is a travesty,” said Maya van Rossum, Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. “The Task Force must remedy this unjust attempt to silence communities by opening up the panels to the people who were expecting to speak at the hearing. This injustice makes mockery of a government committee that is supposed to be serving the public good and seeking real information about LNG. If they can’t operate openly and without discrimination, they should shut themselves down.”

Hohenstein will be joined at the news conference by Zulene Mayfield, a representative from Philly Boricuas, and Adam Nagel, campaign manager of PennFuture.

“The Philadelphia LNG Natural Gas Export Task Force has made its intentions very clear that there is no interest in hearing from those that will most greatly be affected by an LNG terminal,” said Mayfield. “Penn America has made it clear that they want to site this terminal in Chester. Chester is an environmental justice community that is already suffering from overcrowding of polluting facilities. Today, the task force is taking testimony on the safety of this process without any input from our community. Twice now we have been notified that there is no space available for us to speak. Chairperson White should be concerned that there is no one there who can speak for Chester. If they truly want to know of the impacts on a community, a hearing should be held in Chester. This is a sham, and the epitome of systemic racism. No hearings about us, without us!”

“Union leadership should be visionaries and revolutionary in their thoughts and actions,” said Morales. “Instead they’re falling for another scheme that may put money in the pockets of a certain few. They should look at the overall picture of the damage that LNG will bring to the communities of Philadelphia, Chester and especially communities of color, whether Black, brown or destitute white folks who can’t move away.”

“While PennFuture will be providing testimony to the Philadelphia LNG Taskforce, we are aware that neighborhood voices were not presented with the same opportunity to discuss a potential facility that will jeopardize their health, safety, and security,” said Nagel. “And, while we can speak to the inherent danger of what is being explored through Act 133 of 2022, we cannot speak to the mental, emotional and physical costs placed upon primarily Black and brown and low-income communities throughout Southeast Pa. because of policies that continue to advance the interests of the fossil fuel industry. We urge this taskforce to provide meaningful opportunities to neighborhood voices to engage in this process.”

Hohenstein is concerned that this LNG hub could lead to disastrous outcomes for the communities it is built around. He points to recent infrastructure failures including the [train derailment near the Ohio-Pennsylvania border](#) in February, an [LNG plant explosion in Texas](#) in June, and a [call from federal lawmakers to ban the train transportation](#) and delivery of LNG in March.

“LNG export facilities pose a serious risk to offsite communities due to the risk of explosion of the methane itself, or the refrigerants used to cool it to a liquid,” said Schuster. “There are over a hundred thousand people living within a potential evacuation area should an accident occur at the Port of Philadelphia. It is stunning to us that this task force can have a discussion about ‘safety and security’ without inviting the facility’s future neighbors to participate fully.”

“It was less than a year ago that an LNG export facility in Texas exploded, resulting in a 450-foot high fireball,” said Joseph Otis Minott, executive director and chief counsel of the Clean Air Council. “Now imagine that catastrophe happening in a densely populated

urban area like south Philadelphia, Port Richmond, and Chester. If this task force intends to take its job seriously, it will need to hear from more voices than just those seeking to exploit a brutal foreign invasion to lock in corporate profits and dangerous infrastructure."

In addition to these safety and security concerns, Hohenstein has been notified that the location or site of this hub may now be planned for a location in Chester city along the Delaware River. He questions who would pay for security from the Coast Guard, how the state would protect itself from extreme dangers such as terrorist attacks, and why the sudden change of location. The Philadelphia LNG Natural Gas Export Task Force is scheduled to meet with the Coast Guard after tomorrow's hearing.

"I am once again disappointed in the fact that we are still not taking environmental injustice and public health seriously for the residents of this Commonwealth," said state Rep. Carol Kazeem, D-Delaware County. "When I was first informed a little over a year ago about a proposed LNG that would be located in Chester city, I knew that could not happen with Chester city already being a host of one of the largest trash incinerators in our own backyard, also located in a residential community. A possible LNG would cause more destruction to residents' health and their livelihood. With Chester city being a very small community, any mistakes that happen can immediately mean the entire city would be wiped out. There's no explanation or an apology that can clean up that tragic damage."

For additional information, [contact Hohenstein's district office](#) at 215-744-2600.

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Editor's Note: Media coverage is invited to attend.

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