

In **Strong** Opposition to LD1570, Legislation Proposing the Removal of Public Water Fluoridation in Maine.

To the Honorable Members of the Committee of Health and Human Services,

My name is Hena Patel, and I am a general dentist working in Lewiston, ME.

I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to the proposed legislation to remove public water fluoridation in our state. Water fluoridation is one of the most effective, safe, and economical public health measures we use to prevent tooth decay, a chronic and costly disease that affects people of all ages, especially children and underserved populations. Maine is an underserved state, and people are waiting months to see a dentist. The lack of dentists in this state is a large reason why this will be an extreme measure that would increase the public health disparity.

Fluoridation of drinking water has been proven to significantly reduce cavities in both children and adults. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), communities with fluoridated water experience about 25% fewer cavities than those without. That means less pain, fewer dental visits, and lower healthcare costs to those who already cannot afford it. Dentists are truly the only profession advocating for such preventative measures and less treatment.

Importantly, fluoridation is safe. Decades of scientific research, including studies from the World Health Organization, the American Dental Association, and the National Institutes of Health, have found no credible evidence that optimally fluoridated water poses health risks. The fluoride levels used in public systems are regulated, well below any threshold that could lead to harm, and continuously monitored for safety.

We must also consider the equity aspect. Not everyone has regular access to dental care or the means to buy fluoride toothpaste, let alone visit a dentist. I have worked in both private practice and public health settings. It affects me when I see children who have clearly been suffering. Fluoridating water levels the playing field. It reaches people regardless of income, age, or education level. Removing fluoride from public water would disproportionately harm those already at higher risk of decay/infection.

This isn't just about science, it's about effective and compassionate policy. We should not take a step backward on a measure that protects our most vulnerable, reduces healthcare costs, and improves quality of life.

In conclusion, I urge you to stand with the people of Maine, my patients, and oppose this LD1570. Let's continue to stand with scientific evidence and public health success. Fluoridation works. It's safe. And it's the right thing to do.

Thank you,

Hena Patel, DMD