

Greetings Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the committee,

My name is Traci Dempsey, I live in Bath, Maine and I'm testifying on behalf of the Maine Dental Hygienists' Association and urge you to vote **Ought Not to Pass (ONTP) on LD 1570: An Act To Prohibit Fluoridation of the Public Water Supply.**

As a dental hygienist of 25 years and having worked in public health I can tell you first hand our most vulnerable population can not have something so effective and easily accessible such as fluoridated water taken away from them. We have a shortage of dental providers in our state that makes it difficult for private pay and insured patients to receive necessary dental care let alone Mainecare recipients who have an even smaller pool of providers that offer care. If we put this population at an even higher risk of dental disease we are doing them great disservice.

Anti-fluoridation groups like to use studies and literature that is outdated and frankly have data taken from studies where the level of fluoride is exponentially higher than the therapeutic dose used in the drinking water here in Maine. Those studies and reports skew the facts that in safe therapeutic doses fluoridated water offers great benefits to teeth while they are developing. When fluoridated water is consumed during tooth development by pregnant mothers, by infants and toddlers while adult teeth are being formed in the jaw, those teeth are more resistant to tooth decay on a cellular level. Those teeth are stronger and can withstand the decay process better than a tooth that has developed in a child without fluoride. You may hear older generations talk about having "bad teeth" and "they were before fluoride". These remarks are based in truth. We now have generations of young adults who have never had a cavity in their life and grew up drinking fluoridated water at home and at school.

This bill aims to remove fluoride from the public water supply. Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in many wells providing water to Maine citizens. It is unrealistic to expect that wells and springs that provide water to many citizens would be adapted with filters for that water and I imagine that would be very costly to the state. In addition, what will the cost be to roll back the fluoridation processes for municipal water treatment facilities? The legislative session this year began with looking at budgets very closely with little room for spending, especially where is not necessary. This is an area where this is not necessary.

Community water fluoridation is one of the most effective public health measures of the last century. It prevents tooth decay, reduces health disparities, and saves money—about **\$20 in dental costs for every \$1 invested according to the CDC**. The state can not afford to spend additional dollars providing more dental care to Mainecare patients than it already does.

Children, especially those in low-income families, benefit the most. Fluoridation helps keep kids in school and out of pain by preventing the number one chronic disease of childhood: tooth decay.

Please support Maine's long-standing commitment to oral health, and the work of this committee over the past several legislative sessions, and vote **ONTP on LD 1570**.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Traci L. Dempsey, RDH, IPDH

Bath, Maine

President, Maine Dental Hygienists' Association