

By Electronic Mail Only

April 22, 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony in Opposition to LD 1570

Senator Baldacci, Representative Mayer and members of the Committee, I am Brian Duffy, Vice President and General Counsel at Northeast Delta Dental. The Delta Dental Plan of Maine d/b/a Northeast Delta Dental ("Delta Dental") respectfully submits this testimony in opposition to LD 1570. Community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means to prevent tooth decay. Maine communities currently have the ability to make their own decisions about water fluoridation and they should retain that right.

Recent efforts in opposition to community water fluoridation are largely based on a 2024 National Toxicology Program expressing "moderate confidence" that exposures to fluoride concentrations in drinking water higher than the 1.5 mg/L are associated with lower IQ in children. That 1.5 mg/L is more than double the federal government's 0.7 mg/L recommendation for fluoride concentrations in drinking water.

The fact is that decades of experience and research affirm the safety and efficacy of fluoride. Fluoride is proven to reduce tooth decay by strengthening the tooth's enamel, protecting the surface to better resist decay by at least 25%. Following the widespread introduction community water fluoridation in the 1950's and 60's, the United States experienced massive reductions in the prevalence of tooth decay. An abrupt departure from water fluoridation would undoubtedly lead to rising incidence of decay. Maine does not have capacity in its oral health workforce to support the emergency, surgical, and restorative dental needs that would result.

At Delta Dental, our mission is to advance the dental health and overall wellness of our customers and the communities we serve. We invest hundreds of thousands of dollars annually into oral health clinics, school-based oral health programs, and other oral health initiatives to break down barriers faced by underserved (uninsured and underinsured) people in our state with otherwise unmet oral health needs. Community water fluoridation is critical for oral and overall health,

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especially in underserved areas where access to proper oral health care is more limited and rates of tooth decay are higher.

Existing law allows local communities to make decisions about whether to fluoridate their water supplies. Community-based fluoridation decisions are reflective of the oral health priorities and the naturally occurring fluoride levels of each community. We should not prohibit these decisions from being made at the community level.

For the foregoing reasons, I ask that this Committee vote that LD 1570 ought not to pass.

Sincerely,

\s\ Brian Duffy

Brian Duffy, Esq.