

## **Testimony in Opposition to LD 1570: An Act to Prohibit Fluoridation of the Public Water Supply**

To: Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Michael Dowling, DMD; North Yarmouth, Maine

Date: 4/21/2025

Re: Opposition to LD 1570

Dear Chairpersons Ingwersen and Meyer and Members of the Committee,

I am a Board-Certified Pediatric Dentist, Past president of the Maine Society of Pediatric Dentistry, and Chair of the Maine Dental Associations Council on Government Relations. I have testified before this committee in the past about my dedication to treating our state's most vulnerable patients and I believe this piece of legislation could do irreparable harm to our state's public health.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to LD 1570, which proposes to prohibit the fluoridation of public water supplies in Maine. This bill threatens to reverse decades of evidence-based public health policy and would be especially harmful at a time when our state is facing a growing dental health crisis. You will likely hear testimony about the dangers of fluoride, but I would ask that you rely on scientific facts, some of which are highlighted here, not misinformation. The fact is simple. At concentrations used in the United States, fluoride has been shown to be effective and, it has not been shown to have negative effects. Fluoride is a naturally occurring element and much like any element, including Oxygen, taken in inappropriate dosages, it can be toxic. This committee should not rely on fearmongering in making public health decisions.

### **Maine's Dental Health Crisis**

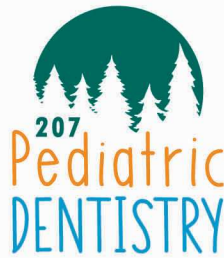
Maine has one of the lowest dentist-to-population ratios in New England. Many communities, particularly in rural areas, face severe shortages of dental providers. Much work is being done to fix some of these issues, but I face a truly heartbreaking level of decay on a daily basis. This is in part due to the fact that much of our state does not receive fluoridate water given its rural nature.

In this context, water fluoridation stands out as a critical public health tool. It is universal, cost-effective, and does not depend on a person's ability to seek clinical care. Removing it would disproportionately harm those already suffering from inadequate access to dental services. The effects of removing fluoride would be born primarily by our state's poorest. Furthermore, the effects of removing fluoride will last a lifetime for these individuals.

Dr. Mike Brown Dowling

701 US Route 1, Suite 3, Yarmouth, Maine 04096  
tel: (207) 536-5835 fax: (207) 536-9987 info@207pd.com

WWW.207PD.COM



## Proven Public Health Benefits

Community water fluoridation is one of the most effective public health strategies for preventing dental disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), fluoridated water reduces cavities by approximately 25% across all age groups (CDC, 2018).

Major systematic reviews have supported these findings:

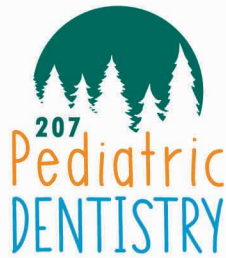
- Griffin et al. (2007) reported consistent reductions in dental caries from water fluoridation across populations (J Dent Res).
- Whelton et al. (2019) confirmed the long-term effectiveness of water fluoridation in both children and adults.
- The American Dental Association, World Health Organization, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services continue to support water fluoridation as a cornerstone of oral health.

## Established Safety

Fluoride has been extensively studied for over 70 years, and the scientific consensus is clear: at the optimal level of 0.7 mg/L, fluoride in drinking water is safe for all populations.

- The U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) reaffirmed in 2015 that 0.7 mg/L is both effective for preventing cavities and safe for lifelong consumption.
- The National Toxicology Program (NTP, 2020) concluded that fluoride at recommended levels poses no significant neurodevelopmental risk, while highlighting a need for more data on extreme exposure levels.
- The Australian NHMRC (2017) reviewed over 3,000 studies and found no adverse effects at community fluoridation levels.
- The European Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER, 2011) also found no credible evidence linking optimal fluoride exposure to cancer or systemic toxicity.
- A landmark study by Broadbent et al. (2014) in New Zealand found no relationship between fluoridated water and lower IQ, directly challenging persistent misinformation.

These findings, backed by the CDC, ADA, and WHO, reinforce that fluoridation remains a safe, science-supported, and essential health intervention.



## Unintended Consequences of LD 1570

Eliminating fluoridation will result in more dental disease, especially among the most vulnerable. It will widen health disparities and increase long-term costs for families and the healthcare system. The punitive fines proposed in this bill would also place an unjust burden on municipalities that are following sound, science-based public health practices.

## Conclusion

LD 1570 threatens a simple, proven, and equitable intervention that protects the health of Mainers across generations. In the face of Maine's worsening dental access crisis, eliminating fluoride would create needless harm, particularly for those already struggling with barriers to care.

I respectfully urge the committee to reject this bill and continue supporting water fluoridation as a vital public health measure.

Thank you for your time and service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,  
Michael Dowling, DMD

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[www.207PD.com](http://www.207PD.com)