

Testimony of Kneka Smith, EdD, MPH
In Strong Opposition of LD1570 “An Act to Prohibit Fluoridation of the Public Water Supply,” As
Amended
Tuesday, April 22, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Dr. Kneka Smith of Portland, Maine. I have worked for multiple decades to advance the health and oral health of the people of Maine and I submit this testimony in strong **opposition** of LD1570.

In the 1990s, I served along with a broad-based group of Mainers to advocate for expanding water fluoridation to reach the communities served by the Portland Water District. I worked for the Maine Bureau of Health as an expert on water fluoridation as an effective public health measure and as the Dental Director for the State of Arizona, where we worked to improve oral health through water fluoridation efforts. I have been an academic dean in three dental schools where I served as an associate professor teaching preventive dentistry.

I continue to be a strong advocate for the fluoridation of drinking water, reported by the US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention as one of the Ten Greatest Public Health Achievements of the last century. This is not the time to stop an effective public health effort that is working for Maine people and not a time to silence the voices in local communities across the state.

Water fluoridation works! It saves money.

We have almost eight decades of data supporting the safety and effectiveness of fluoridation of drinking water in the prevention of tooth decay, the most common chronic disease affecting children and adults. Water fluoridation began in 1945 and reaches millions of people in the United States. When water fluoridation began, tooth decay was rampant in children, adults and seniors. We have seen major improvements in oral health over the generations. The improved oral health of the nation is, in part, attributed to water fluoridation, which is safe and inexpensive and positively improves the health of people regardless of socioeconomic status or access to dental care. Water fluoridation is a tried-and-true approach to improving the health of children, adults and seniors and decreasing the cost of care.

What is fluoride?

Fluoride occurs naturally in different amounts in water and soil. It is nature’s cavity fighter. Water fluoridation is simply the adjustment of the naturally occurring fluoride in drinking water to the appropriate level to prevent dental cavities. Water fluoridation is the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay.

Water fluoridation has broad support.

Fluoridation of drinking water is supported by nearly every dental, medical, medical specialty, and public health organization including the American Dental Association, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, US Public Health Service, World Health Organization, March of Dimes Foundation, National Kidney Foundation, American Nurses Association, etc.

Please vote **ought not to pass** on LD1570 to protect the dental health and health of Maine people.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.