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Water Fluoridation Comment for hearing on Water Fluoridation

Committee Members, I am a retired general dentist previously licensed and practicing in the State of Maine, from July 1981 until July 2020. My practice was in Falmouth, Maine for thirty-five years. During this time my practice demographic was roughly 45-50% of patients under 20 years old. Approximately 25% of patients were under 10 years old, and half of these patients were under 5 years old. Some of the care of these children was provided in the operating rooms of Westbrook and Mercy Hospitals. Besides this pediatric component of my practice, I enjoyed providing endodontic (root canal) services to patients of all ages. I performed this therapy on between 300-350 canals per year prior to 2005-2006. In 1998 the Portland Water District (PWD) began treatment of their water system with fluoride following the successful passage of the referendum in support of fluoridation within the PWD communities. In the 22 years after the beginning of water fluoridation of the PWD I saw a steady decline in number of patients, children and adults, with new cavities. My office did not tally this decline officially, although by about 2010 we did keep a running total of the number of patients my office saw for clinical exams, 6 month check-ups, who presented with no new cavities. The number of cavity free patients I saw of all ages continued to increase year after year until my retirement. During this same time I saw a steady decline of patients who needed root canal therapy to treat dental infection and preserve and restore a badly decayed tooth. I was finally doing so few root canal procedures a year, less than fifty, that I felt I was not able to maintain my proficiency in the procedure so I stopped performing them! During this same time period I stopped performing hospital dentistry for young children and handicapped patients. I was not seeing patients with extensive dental decay that was evidenced in pre-2000-2005 patient populations.

My conclusion: Research supporting the efficacy of water fluoridation as a highly effective, inexpensive method of improving patient health has been demonstrated since 1940's. In the State of Maine this can be seen in the decrease of hospital emergency room visits related to infected teeth in every community in the state with a hospital. I dare say that as larger communities fluoridated their water supplies the emergency rooms saw a declined in visits related to patients with infected teeth. Also, at the same time for adults, missed work days cause by dental infections declined, dental infections being a leading cause of missed work days. Research showed this decline from the earliest days in the 1950's. This early research was base almost completely on fluoridation's effect preventing new tooth decay in permanent teeth, not baby teeth.

Finally, with the fluoridation of the PWD, the largest cohort of the state's population was treated to the benefit of reduced tooth decay and dental infection by merely drinking a glass or two of water every day! In 1998 with the inclusion of the ten communities of PWD into a fluoridated water system the percentage of Maine residents receiving fluoride daily topped 70%. For those residents of fluoridated water systems in the state of Maine who where lucky enough to enjoy this benefit, fluoridated water, from birth to age 10 or 12 years they may never know the tooth ache pain from a decayed tooth!

DO NOT REPEAL PREVIOUS LEGISLATION. INSTEAD MANDATE THAT EVERY PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY IN THE STATE BE FLUORIDATED, FOR THE HEALTH OF EVERYONE OF YOUR CONSTITUENTS!

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