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Testimony in OPPOSITION of LD 1570, An Act to Prohibit Fluoridation of the Public Water Supply

Committee on Health and Human Services

April 24, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Dr. Annie Coates, and I am a practicing pediatric pulmonologist and Vice President of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists dedicated to protecting the health of Maine children and adolescents. I am writing in strong opposition to LD 1570, An Act to Prohibit Fluoridation of the Public Water Supply.

Community water fluoridation is one of the most effective, safest, and most equitable public health measures in our history. Fluoride in public water supplies helps prevent tooth decay by strengthening enamel and making teeth more resistant to acid attacks from plaque bacteria and sugars. Prohibiting communities in Maine from fluoridating their water supplies would be a serious step backward for oral health in Maine and would be detrimental to the health of our children.

In pediatrics, we routinely see the impacts of poor oral health—pain, infections, missed school days, expensive emergency visits, and difficulty eating and speaking. These outcomes disproportionately affect children from lower-income households and rural areas with less access to dental care. Community water fluoridation is one of the few preventive measures that reaches everyone—regardless of income, insurance, or access to a dentist. It's especially important for a state like Maine, where only 35% of children have access to a dental home (1). Lack of access to routine dental care makes community water fluoridation even more impactful and essential.

There is not a day that goes by where at least a third of the children I care for have dental caries. This isn't just a dental issue. This is a public health issue.

Community water fluoridation is a safe and effective way to prevent tooth decay and keep Maine kids healthy. LD 1570 would strip away a proven, low-cost, high-impact public health measure. Maine communities deserve solutions that are backed by science and promote the well-being of all residents. I urge the committee to vote "Ought NOT to pass" on LD 1570.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Annie Coates, MD

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References:

1. Fox, K. S., Kumarage, A., McGuire, C., & Stultz, E. (2024). Assessing Maine children's access to a dental home: Dental insurance does not guarantee receipt of dental care. University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service Catherine E. Cutler Institute, Population Health & Health Policy