

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, good afternoon. My name is Ashley Blanchfield of Augusta and I am here to testify in opposition to LD 1570. I am a board-certified pediatric dentist and I own Augusta Pediatric Dentistry. My job is very rewarding. At times, it can be silly and cute and even fun.

But it is hard. It is hard to see a 7 year old boy miss school picture day because he'd been up all night with a toothache. It is hard to see an 11 year old girl actually grateful for an injection of numbing medicine because her tooth hurts so much. It is hard to see a mother who has driven around for 5 hours to every dentist on Google with her screaming 2-year-old whose face is so swollen I sent him to the emergency room for fear of a dental infection spreading to his brain. It is hard to comprehend that all these scenarios happen daily to our children in Maine. And it is especially hard to comprehend that this is entirely preventable.

But I'll tell you what I'm not here to do.

I am not here to convince you that cavities hurt. Or that tooth decay is the number one preventable disease of childhood. I am not here to convince you of the scientific veracity of decades of validated research behind community water fluoridation. The literature speaks for itself. I am not here to convince you of how expensive tooth decay is. Or what an insurmountable burden the disappearance of fluoridated water will put on our dental delivery system in this state. Because you already know that.

What I am here to do is represent Maine's most vulnerable population - our children. The numbers speak for themselves. There are about 250,000 kids in Maine. Approximately 50% of those have Mainecare. Of those receiving benefits, only about 20% have a dental home. That leaves about 100,000 children in Maine whose only protection from potentially painful tooth decay is community water fluoridation.

Confiscating their access to fluoride is an experiment that Maine's children should not have to suffer through. This experiment has historically failed. In 2007, Juneau, Alaska removed fluoride from its water. I lived and practiced there in the aftermath of this decision and the effect was devastating. The number of cavity-related dental procedures in children more than doubled. That's a lot of kids. And a lot of money. I fear we will see the same poor outcome Juneau did should LD 1570 pass.

In closing, I cannot stress enough that our children are our most vulnerable and most innocent population. They do not choose their situation in life. They do not choose where they live or what they drink. They do not choose to get cavities. And they do not choose to be in pain. Let's not choose that for them.

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