

Susan Ann Harvey DMD - Testimony Against LD #1570

Apr 22 @ 1:00 pm in Cross Building, Room 209

Good Morning. My name is Susan Harvey. I am a resident of Bangor, a dentist licensed in the state of Maine and am currently pursuing my Master's in Public Health at USM. I am here to share my strong opposition to bill #1570 which seeks to make community water fluoridation illegal in the state of Maine. As a school-based dentist in an elementary school in Bangor, every day I see children who benefit from community water fluoridation. In fact, for many of these young patients, the fluoride they receive in their water is the only dental care they can regularly depend on.

We live in a state that is in the midst of a dental care crisis. Many areas of our state are "dental care deserts." We simply do not have enough providers to provide the necessary care for our citizens. Even for those Mainers that live geographically close to a dental care provider can face significant barriers to accessing preventive care and critical treatment, such as long waiting lists and high cost. The lack of comprehensive care providers and the barriers to access this care are the major factors in why the continuation of fluoridation of Maine public water systems is critical to the overall good health of my neighbors and all Maine's citizens.

Reasonable levels of fluoride in drinking water is a critical tool to keeping Maine healthy. Healthy mouths, teeth and gums have a significant impact on the overall health of everyone. Fluoride works by making your teeth harder and more resistant to the decay that causes cavities. Fluoride can help reverse damage caused to your teeth by the bacteria that cause decay. Fluoride is naturally occurring in water and communities that utilize water fluoridation monitor the levels to maintain a healthy range.

Making water fluoridation illegal in the public water supplied to citizens of the state of Maine will have devastating effects to all Mainers but specifically low-income children, some of our most vulnerable citizens, as well as other marginalized communities. Studies have shown that lack of fluoridation will cause children to have more cavities, increased pain from infection, and more lost teeth due to severe dental decay which puts them at risk for systemic infections. Inflamed and infected teeth affect children and adults ability to sleep, focus and learn and ultimately it decreases an individual's ability to become employed and maintain jobs, which creates unnecessary and preventable economic loss across our state. Overall, banning the ability of municipalities to reasonably fluoridate public water supplies will decrease the quality of life of our children and families across Maine.

Please continue to keep community water fluoridation legal in the state of Maine. We owe it to our children to offer them the best start in life and to help protect adults who may not have adequate access to comprehensive dental care. Fluoride helps us do just that. Thank you.

Susan Ann Harvey, DMD
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