

10/19/2024

Dear Members of the Interim Joint Committee on State Government:

Hello. My name is Amber Dones. I am a wife, mother, and proud Kentuckian. For the past 27 years I have worked in the dental field in some capacity... front desk, back office, sterilization, as a dental assistant, and now as a dental hygienist. This letter to you has been a long-time-coming. I am not proud to say that had a hand in getting fluoride into the water supply in my hometown back in California in 1998. Over the years I have come to realize that water fluoridation is an antiquated, misunderstood way of trying to help people improve their dental health. If I can say one thing about the whole idea after SO many years of researching and working on my patients who have grown up in areas with fluoridated water it would be this: **WATER FLUORIDATION DOES NOT WORK.** In fact, it is one of the least effective ways to attempt to improve oral health. Besides its inefficacy, it isn't right that so many have been made to live in areas without a choice as to whether their water had fluoride in it or not.

At the age of 19 I was, like many, idealistic, and not well-read on the subject of fluoride. I knew that fluorine was a naturally-occurring substance, but that was about it. A well-meaning dentist, who was very active in the local dental society, approached me and asked if I would consider dropping off informational packets to all of the dentists in my hometown of Santa Maria, California. Enthusiastically, I did exactly that, and I also made it a bit of a personal crusade to "help my fellow man" by doing my part in ensuring that the City Council voted YES on allowing fluoride into our water supply. I spoke at City Council meetings, I invited folks to the various informational events concerning water fluoridation, and I listened to concerns voiced by locals who were totally against water fluoridation. I spent a lot of time listening to people tell me that they were not comfortable with having chemicals put into their drinking water, and that they didn't want their children bathing in the stuff. One father of five took his time trying to explain to me that the fluoride being put into the water was actually by-product waste from the creation of fertilizers! He and I became friends and would speak to each other every time we saw each other at a City Council meeting. I will never forget the night that the City Council unanimously voted YES to allow fluoride into our water. At that point I was no longer 100% sure of my little crusade to prevent decay in my neck-of-the-woods. By this time I'd heard so much, read what I could, and became uneasy about the desperate looks on the faces of the folks who tried so very hard to prevent their local government from putting some additive into their water. Water is VERY important to the human body. Should it have a bunch of extra chemicals besides the naturally-occurring minerals we hope might be in there? Do we really want to bathe in fluoride? What might it do to our bodies? I didn't exactly know the answer to these questions. For the very first time in my life, though, I realized that issues like these aren't cut-and-dried. When you have various folks who don't agree with each other on something like this, isn't it better to err on the side of caution and NOT do something that may have detrimental effects, especially when we don't know the possible outcome? Is it morally right to FORCE a large group of concerned citizens to consume fluoridated water because another group thinks it is good for them? I mean, you cannot escape fluoridated water unless you install a very expensive home filtering device. This meant that people who were economically disadvantaged wouldn't be able to remove the chemical even if they badly wanted to! Originally, I thought myself on the side of

the people who couldn't afford good dental care. Now I realized that my assumed righteous position was essentially forcing people to spend money that they didn't have trying to avoid (in their eyes) poisoning their loved ones! Which position was the right position to be in??! I didn't know the answer to these questions at the age of 19, but I most definitely was affected by this whole event. And the nail-in-the-coffin, so to speak, was when that father of five approached me after that last City Council meeting. He had this dejected look on his face, and he said to me, "I know you meant well, but someday you will regret this decision." He walked off to his car. I stood there in shock. I didn't think he was trying to be rude. I knew he had many valid points, and I had recently come to the decision that it was in fact WRONG to be forcing people to ingest something they were totally against putting into their bodies. It was a bittersweet end to the whole experience and I was not sure I had done a good thing.

That gentleman was totally right. I DO regret the decision to fluoridate water. That is why this letter to you is a long-time-coming.

As a dental hygiene student just a few years later I learned that fluoride (in the water supply OR topically-applied) wasn't the only way to improve a person's oral health. In fact, there are SO many other ways a person can prevent oral decay. Many of these ways are cheaper and more effective. NOT drinking soda or sweet tea, for example. NOT consuming too much sugar. Actually brushing and flossing the correct way. As I briefly studied fluoride in school, some of my future colleagues were presenting research projects concerning the detrimental effects of fluoride in our water supply. A dental hygiene instructor from Loma Linda University even spoke with me about how important it was that fluoride be taken out of the water, not just because it was put in without much oversight, but because it doesn't work as well as they say it does.

In my long-time career as a dental hygienist I have come to the conclusion that fluoridated water is NOT worth the time or money. The various reasons behind this conclusion include water fluoridation being proven to lower the IQ of children, tooth decay, discoloration of the dentition, skeletal weakness - leaving bones more prone to fracture, high blood pressure, skin issues, increased risk of hypothyroidism, and neurological problems. Now that the National Toxicology Program (NTP) has recently come out stating that fluoridated water may affect the neurodevelopment/cognition of children and babies-in-utero, bringing to light something that regular folks have been sounding-the-alarm about for years now, hopefully we here in Kentucky can at least give our citizens the right to choose. Kentuckians deserve to be able to work with their local water producers to determine if water fluoridation is right for their community.

Please keep in mind all I've shared with you today when you consider AN ACT relating to water fluoridation programs. Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Amber Dones ~ Kentucky Registered Dental Hygienist
amberdones@gmail.com