



February 8, 2024
House Standing Committee on State Government Members
702 Capitol Avenue
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

SUBJECT: Protect community water fluoridation programs.

Dear Members of the House Standing Committee on State Government,

As a collective group of concerned healthcare providers, business leaders, active community members, and oral health advocates, we write to you today regarding discussion of water fluoridation programs. For over 70 years, public water providers in Kentucky have had a direct impact on improving the oral health of children and adults through community water fluoridation.

Community water fluoridation is a safe, reliable, cost-effective preventive measure to keep teeth strong and reduce cavities by at least 25%. With our collective interest in improving the oral health of all people in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, we are deeply concerned about any efforts to make water fluoridation programs optional in our communities.

Community water fluoridation benefits children and adults across income levels and throughout their lifespan. Kentucky leads the nation with 99% of our communities with water fluoridation programs, an important preventive factor in a state plagued by dental deserts and barriers to accessing regular dental care. Additionally, an analysis of Medicaid claims in three states found that children living in fluoridated communities had lower treatment costs related to tooth decay than did similar children living in non-fluoridated communities. Fluoridation not only saves money, but it allows children and adults to learn and work pain-free.

As a state that consistently ranks in the bottom five on oral health outcomes, we cannot afford to move backward. We strongly urge you to oppose HB 141 and support continued community water fluoridation in the interest of oral health in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Sincerely,

Delta Dental of Kentucky
Kentucky Dental Association
Kentucky Dental Hygienists' Association
Kentucky Oral Health Coalition
Kentucky Primary Care Association
Louisville Water Company



10 Reasons to Fluoridate Public Water

Single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has proclaimed community water fluoridation one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century (along with recognition of tobacco use as a health hazard and control of infectious disease).

Natural. Fluoride is already present in all water sources, even the oceans. Water fluoridation is simply the adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally to a recommended level for preventing tooth decay.

Similar to fortifying other foods and beverages. Water that has been fluoridated is similar to fortifying salt with iodine, milk with vitamin D, orange juice with calcium and bread with folic acid.

Protects all ages against cavities. Studies show that community water fluoridation prevents at least 25 percent of tooth decay in children and adults, even in an era with widespread availability of fluoride from other sources, such as fluoride toothpaste.

Safe and effective. For more than 70 years, the best available scientific evidence consistently indicates that community water fluoridation is safe and effective.

Saves money. Fluoridation is cost-saving even for small communities. An analysis of Medicaid claims in three states found that children living in fluoridated communities had lower treatment costs related to tooth decay than did similar children living in non-fluoridated communities. An individual can have a lifetime of fluoridated water for less than the cost of a silver filling.

Equitable. Community water fluoridation benefits everyone, but especially those without access to regular dental care. **Community water fluoridation is a powerful tool in the fight for social justice and health equity.** It is a powerful strategy in efforts to eliminate health disparities among populations.

Recognized by more than 100 organizations. The American Dental Association (ADA) as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Medical Association, the World Health Organization and more than 125 national and international organizations recognize the public health benefits of water fluoridation for preventing dental decay.

Availability of fluoridation continues to grow. In 2014, 74.4 percent of the U.S. population on public water systems (211.4 million people) received fluoridated water. The Healthy People 2020 goal is for 79.6 % of the population on public water systems to have access to fluoridated water. At the state level, in 2014 twenty states met or exceeded the Healthy People 2020 Objective to reach 79.6%. That includes Kentucky (ranked #1) which has 99.9% of its population on public water systems enjoying the benefits of optimally fluoridated water.

Endorsed by the American Dental Association. One of the most widely respected sources for information regarding fluoridation and fluoride is the American Dental Association. Learn more on the ADA's website at ADA.org/fluoride.