

December 11, 2017

Hon. Senator Jason Lewis,  
Joint Committee on Public Health  
State House, Room A-2  
Boston, MA- 02133

Hon. Representative Kate Hogan,  
Joint Committee on Public Health  
State House, Room  
Boston, MA -02133

Dear Chairman Lewis and Chairman Hogan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Better Oral Health for Massachusetts Coalition and the Massachusetts Dental Society, representing over 5,000 dentists, I am writing in opposition to *An Act prohibiting the use of fluoride in public drinking water in the Commonwealth* (Senate Bill 1226).

Community water fluoridation is a safe and cost-effective preventive measure that provides protection from dental decay throughout the lifespan, regardless of age, race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status<sup>1,2,3</sup>. According to the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), although tooth decay is both preventable and treatable, it continues to be the number one chronic disease affecting young children. Drinking fluoridated water keeps teeth strong and reduces cavities (tooth decay) by about 25% in children and adults<sup>1</sup>. The CDC recognizes community water fluoridation along with antibiotics and vaccines as one of the ten greatest achievements in public health during the twentieth century<sup>1</sup>.

The scientific community and credible organizations such as: American Dental Association, American Medical Association, National Cancer Institute, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Dietetic Association, Institute of Medicine, and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, widely endorses the effectiveness of community water fluoridation based on the evidence.

Research done by the Campaign for Dental Health suggests that optimally fluoridated water protects your teeth without posing risks to your health<sup>4</sup>. While fluoride occurs naturally in water, the fluoride level can be adjusted in community water settings serving most American households to reduce tooth decay<sup>4</sup>. Community water fluoridation has not only proven to reduce dental decay but also lowered dental costs leading to outcomes that have important impact on overall health<sup>4</sup>.

Tooth decay affects 25% of children before kindergarten and approximately 30% of adults<sup>6</sup>. Oral health disparities in Massachusetts mirror the trends of the nation.<sup>6</sup> Non-elderly adults were particularly likely to report unmet need for dental care due to cost- 24.4 % of non-elderly adults versus 2.6 % children and 16% elderly adults<sup>6</sup>. Evidence suggests that untreated oral diseases interfere with work and employed adults tend to lose approximately 164

million work hours, children were estimated to lose 51 million school hours each year leading to poor academic performances.<sup>5</sup>

At BOHMAC and in collaboration with the Massachusetts Dental Society, we are dedicated to improving, promoting and protecting the oral health of Massachusetts residents. With a focus on promoting good oral health and reducing oral health disparities, we support community water fluoridation.

Sincerely,

John P. Fisher, DDS  
Chair, Better Oral Health for Massachusetts Coalition  
Trustee, Massachusetts Dental Society

References:

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6. Health Policy Commission. August 1, 2016. Oral Health care access and emergency department utilization for avoidable oral health conditions in Massachusetts. *Oral Health Policy Brief*. Retrieved from <http://www.mass.gov/anf/budget-taxes-and-procurement/oversight-agencies/health-policy-commission/publications/oral-health-policy-brief.pdf>