

Testimony

HB 1605: Water fluoridation

House Human Services Committee

Representative Matt Ruby, Chair

Date of Hearing: February 3, 2025)

To Chair Ruby, Vice Chair Johnson and Ostlie, and members of the committee:

My name is Shawnda Schroeder. I am a professor at the University of North Dakota, have worked in oral health program development, research, and evaluation for over a decade in the State, and am writing you this letter as a member of the Grand Forks community.

I ask you to oppose and recommend a “do not pass” on HB 1605.

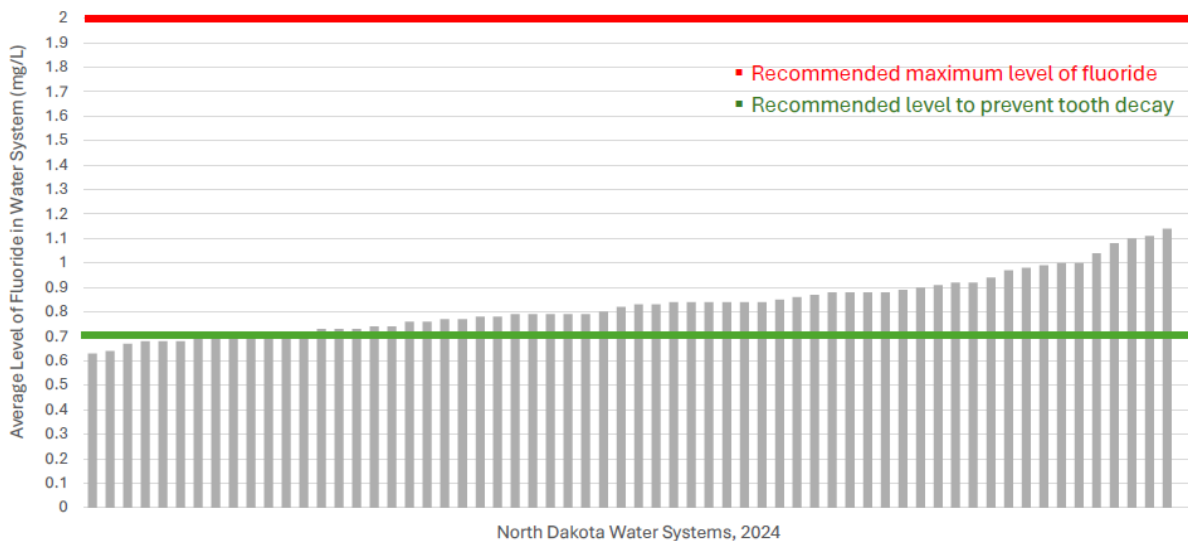
We recognize it is your role to make informed, data-driven decisions that promote the health and well-being of all residents in North Dakota. Unfortunately, some of the information regarding water fluoridation has been inaccurate or misleading. Recent claims suggest that water fluoridation harms IQ levels. This is a dangerous misrepresentation of scientific research. Studies cited by the National Institutes of Health, *JAMA Pediatrics*, and the National Toxicology Program (NTP) have consistently found that fluoride exposure at recommended levels has no adverse effects on adult cognition. Pediatric concerns arise only at fluoride levels **twice** the recommended limit — not the safe, controlled levels that are reported in North Dakota water systems.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends a level of **0.7 milligrams per Liter (mg/L)** of fluoride in your drinking water. This is the level that prevents tooth decay and promotes good oral health. Guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established a maximum allowable concentration of 4.0 mg/L fluoride in public drinking water systems and a recommended maximum concentration of 2.0 mg/L to prevent dental fluorosis. On average, in 2024, no water system came anywhere near the recommended maximum concentration of fluoride in the community water systems. Looking at data dating back to 2015, this remains true.

To demonstrate, below is a bar chart that shows the average level of fluoride (mg/L) in the 63 community water systems in North Dakota from 2024. The red line indicates the level of fluoride that has been found in some studies to be at a level of risk for negative outcomes. In the last ten years of data, there has never been a community in North Dakota at that level. The green line marks the recommended level for prevention of fluoridation that is encouraged by national health organizations to improve dental health.

The NTP explicitly states that fluoride at recommended levels poses no risk and significantly benefits oral health, a conclusion supported by extensive research and decades of real-world data. These studies are [summarized by the NTP](#).

Figure. Average Level of Fluoride Concentration (mg/L) in the 63 Reporting Water Systems in North Dakota, 2024



Science and Expertise Over Misinformation

Residents and council members will encounter diverse perspectives on this issue. However, credible guidance comes from established organizations such as:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- The American Dental Association (ADA)
- The American Academy of Pediatrics
- The American Medical Association
- The American Public Health Association (APHA)

Together, these groups represent over 500,000 medical and dental professionals who endorse water fluoridation as a safe and effective public health measure.

Importantly, individual dissenting voices, even from health professionals, do not reflect the stance of their fields. For example, the American Public Health Association’s declaration that “community water fluoridation is the most cost-effective public health measure for preventing dental caries.” ([APHA](#)).

Specific Benefits of Safe Levels of Community Water Fluoridation: North Dakota Data

The U.S. Public Health Service recommends an optimal fluoride concentration of 0.7 milligrams per liter (mg/L), a level proven safe and effective. There is NO link between this level of fluoride and adverse outcomes! The North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services Oral Health Program works directly with the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Water Quality and with local water operators to ensure that our water is safe, and at optimal levels of fluoride. Our community waters systems in North Dakota consistently maintain this level thanks to the diligence of local water operators, who have received national recognition for their excellence.

Fluoridated water reduces cavities by about 25% in children and adults, saving families an average of \$32 per person annually in dental costs ([CDC](#)). This is particularly critical in North Dakota, where access to dental care is limited:

- Less than 50% of kindergarteners had a preventive dental visit in the past year.

- Nearly 1 in 3 adults did not see a dentist in the last year.
- 80% of Medicaid-covered children under age 5 did not have a dental visit in the past year.

Community water fluoridation serves as a lifeline for these individuals, reducing disparities in oral health and preventing the pain and expense of untreated dental decay.

A Call to Action for City Council and Residents

As this debate continues, I urge you to critically evaluate the sources of information being presented. Reliable data is readily available from trusted organizations like the North Dakota Department of Health Oral Health Program, the North Dakota Dental Association, and the Department of Environmental Quality.

I urge you to oppose and recommend a “do not pass” on HB 1605.

Fluoridation is not just a scientific consensus—it’s a proven public health success story. Let’s ensure North Dakota continues to prioritize the health of its residents by keeping fluoride in our community water systems.

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