

HB 1605-Relating to relating to the prohibition of water fluoridation

Position-Opposition

House Human Services Committee, Matt Ruby, Chairman

February 3, 2025

Chairman Ruby and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Dr Brent Holman, former Executive Director of the North Dakota Dental Association and a retired pediatric dentist from Fargo. I urge a **DO NOT PASS** on **HB 1605**.

I have 40 years of clinical experience in pediatric dentistry and have worked and/or volunteered in most dental public health settings/organizations in North Dakota, including the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, Head Start, and Dental Missions of Mercy (including Standing Rock, Turtle Mountain, and Spirit Lake communities). As a pediatric dentist, I have seen clinically the dramatic increase in early childhood decay in young children that consumed fluoride-deficient, well water from birth. The effects of this increase in disease especially impacts low-income children. The science of fluoridation is exhaustive in its thoroughness and I have witnessed clinically the astounding preventive benefits of public water fluoridation. Decades of studies demonstrated 40-60% reductions in lifetime decay rates and impressive cost savings. It is estimated that for every dollar spent on community water fluoridation, \$20 is saved in averted treatment costs (O'Connell J, Rockell J, Ouellet J, Tomar SL, Maas W. Costs and Savings Associated with Community Water Fluoridation in the United States. Health Affairs (Millwood). 2016;35(12):2224-2232). In a legislative session, where this committee is hearing testimony about lack of Medicaid access/funding for low-income patients, it seems counterproductive to eliminate what has been termed "one of the greatest public health measures in our nation's history".

A national discussion about fluoridation safety and children has recently surfaced generating various opinions about a subject with decades of research standards. As a true authority, I reference Dr Scott Tomar. Dr Tomar is Professor and Associate Dean for Prevention and Public Health Sciences at the University of Illinois Chicago College of Dentistry. He is a member of ADA's National Fluoridation Advisory Committee.

Dr Tomar states in the January 29th issue of the American Dental Association News:

***“Much attention has been focused on the possible effect of fluoride exposure on children’s IQ, a claim that goes back decades but was highlighted by several recent publications. The National Toxicology Program, a federal interagency program headquartered in the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, issued a monograph on fluoride exposure and neurodevelopment in August 2024. Two previous iterations of that monograph were heavily criticized by an expert panel from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine — the group chosen by NTP to serve as peer reviewers — due to serious flaws in the conduct, analysis and presentation of that review. For the final version of the monograph, NTP bypassed NASEM and chose other reviewers, but the serious limitations remained. Because of NASEM’s criticism, the NTP report excluded a meta-analysis that had been in earlier versions. The authors subsequently had that piece published as a stand-alone paper in January, but the NTP monograph and recent paper shared the same fundamental weakness: Of the 72 studies that assessed the association between fluoride exposure and IQ, almost three-fourths of them were judged — even by the authors — to be of low quality and high risk for bias, and almost all of the studies were from areas in countries such as China, India and Iran with very high levels of fluoride — often from coal burning and other pollution sources— and unknown contaminants in the water. Several additional concerns about the study have been noted in an editorial published in the same journal issue. The quality and validity of a systematic review and meta-analysis can be no better than the quality of the studies they include. Importantly, the NTP monograph and separately published meta-analysis found no significant association between exposure to fluoride at the levels used in community water fluoridation and children’s IQ. A more recent well-conducted prospective cohort study from Australia also found no association between water fluoridation and children’s*”**

IQ, nor did other recent systematic reviews on IQ and low levels of fluoride exposure. The level of fluoride used in community water fluoridation simply is not associated with changes in IQ or any other measure of neurodevelopment. The judge in the recent court case brought against the Environmental Protection Agency by an anti-fluoridation group acknowledged there was no evidence of any harm associated with the levels of fluoride used in community water fluoridation.”

To summarize, please allow the issue of community water fluoridation to continue to be supported by local governments. Community water fluoridation is the most studied and cost-effective, preventive public health measure in dentistry in my lifetime. Please Vote **DO NOT PASS on HB 1605**. Thank you.

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