



Testimony in support of HB 5350, An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's  
Recommendations on Fluoridation of the Public Water Supply

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Jesse White-Fresé, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers. I am testifying in support of HB 5350 that will optimize community water fluoridation to the level recommended by the US Department of Health and Human Services. As you know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) named community water fluoridation as one of the "Ten Great Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century". I urge you to support the continuation of the requirement to add fluoride in public water supplies.

It is widely known that good oral health impacts overall health. We now know that cavities are a disease that can be prevented with a combination of good dental hygiene, regular dental care, sealants on teeth, and the addition of fluoride to mineralize the teeth. The rampant decay that was common earlier in this century has been greatly reduced due to fluoride in the public water supply. Fluoride prevents dental disease. It is the most efficient way to prevent one of the most common childhood diseases - dental decay. An estimated 51 million school hours are lost each year due to dental-related illness.

In School Based Health Centers (SBHCs), our medical providers include a general oral exam as part of a well-child exam, and are able to connect children to care that do not have a dental home. At least 12 of 26 SBHC programs are able to offer dental services through the health centers. They see the value of fluoride in drinking water every day. And while they continue to see decay in children's teeth, the number and extent of that decay would be far worse without fluoride. Some children do not drink enough water to reap the full benefits of fluoride. To give the child's teeth an extra protective boost, fluoride varnish or fluoride treatments are provided as part of a dental hygiene visit in SBHCs. Water fluoridation benefits all Connecticut residents, especially children and families living in poverty who have the least access to dental care.

We know that community water fluoridation is endorsed by leading health organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association, and the CDC. Fluoridation's positive impact is supported by hundreds of studies and nearly 70 years of experience.

On a personal note, I can say that had I grown up with fluoride in my drinking water, I would not have spent endless Saturday mornings in the dental chair having huge cavities treated and repaired on multiple occasions. This led to expensive dental procedures in my adulthood and compromised the strength of my teeth. We want to be sure that vulnerable young children and adolescents are endowed with the health benefits conferred by fluoride.

On behalf of the members of the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers, I urge you to support and pass HB 5350. Thank you.

**Healthy Kids Make Better Learners**

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