Testimony of

Deb Polun
Director, Government Affairs/Media Relations
Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

House Bill 5350: An Act Concerning The Department of Public Health's Recommendations on Fluoridation of The Public Water Supply

Public Health Committee

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 5350, An Act Concerning The Department of Public Health's Recommendations on Fluoridation of The Public Water Supply.

On behalf of Connecticut’s federally-qualified health centers (FQHCs), which serve over 350,000 patients each year, I voice my support for this common sense, budget-neutral bill.

As the committee knows, HB 5350 will implement DPH’s recommendations to align Connecticut’s water fluoride levels with federal guidelines in the present and future. Adopting this bill as drafted will prevent the need to revisit this issue if federal guidelines change in the future. For example, over the past five years, experts in community health have adjusted guidelines concerning the appropriate daily intake for Vitamin D and Calcium.

Water fluoridation is the adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally in water to an optimal level to prevent tooth decay. Thousands of research studies and 75 years of experience have shown that water fluoridation is safe and one of the best methods of improving the oral health of a community. Major health and medical organizations support fluoridation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in particular, names community water fluoridation one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century. Studies show that water fluoridation prevents at least 25% of tooth decay in children and adults over a lifetime. Fluoridation is not only safe and effective, but cost effective as well. In fact, the cost to fluoridate water for the lifetime of one person is less than the cost to treat a single cavity! Fluoridation saves taxpayer dollars.
Fluoridation is still a relevant issue in the 21st century. Dental caries (tooth decay) is largely preventable, yet remains the most chronic disease of children aged 5-17 years. In Connecticut, tooth decay affects:

- 1 out of 5 children, ages 3-5 years
- 2 out of 5 children, ages 6-9 years

Oral health is directly connected to the overall health of children and adults: research shows that children with poor dental health are nearly three times more likely to miss school and are four times more likely to earn poor grades.

The quality and safety of fluoride additives are ensured by NSF/ANSI Standard 60, a program commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and managed by NSF international. Fluoride levels are monitored daily in Connecticut to ensure safe and effective levels.

Ninety percent of communities in Connecticut have access to fluoridated water. Fluoridation is an equitable preventive solution that is available to the rich, the poor, men, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and many others. A 2002 research paper concluded that fluoridated water is “the most effective and practical method” for closing the gap of tooth decay between affluent and disadvantaged Americans.

Thank you for your support of this proposal.