

**Washington Dental Service
Foundation**

Community Advocates for Oral Health

January 3rd, 2014

Dear Members of the State Board of Health,

Thank you for approving a set of comprehensive recommendations for improving the oral health of Washington residents. We support your vision and commend the work you have invested.

We are excited about your recommendations to improve prevention, education, and access to care. This includes expanding access to dental sealants, strengthening Washington's oral health infrastructure, and improving health literacy for residents.

We are especially excited about your support for community water fluoridation. Community water fluoridation reduces cavities on average by 25% for young and old, rich and poor alike. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls it one of the top 10 public health interventions of the 20th century, alongside vaccinations and tobacco prevention. Because there are few barriers to access tap water, fluoridation reduces health disparities for low-income and people of color. For our part, we will continue to offer capital funding to communities ready to upgrade their water system with community water fluoridation.

We can do more together. While our state has made great strides in expanding access to oral health care for children, too many kids still suffer from preventable tooth decay. Untreated dental disease can be intensely painful and affect a child's ability to eat, learn and sleep.

For adults, painful dental disease can result in poor nutrition, make it much harder to land or keep a job, and affect chronic conditions like diabetes so that it is even more difficult to remain healthy. Oral disease is also linked to other significant health problems including diabetes, heart disease, strokes and pneumonia.

Too often people see their oral health as disconnected from their overall health. The passage of these recommendations by the State Board of Health helps to put the mouth back in the body. We look forward to further collaboration to improve the oral health – and overall health - of Washington residents.

Best Regards,



Laura Smith
President and CEO
Washington Dental Service Foundation