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Communities support the national standard for community water fluoridation

Dear Esteemed Members of the Washington State Board of Health,

We applaud your continued focus on improving the oral health of Washington residents and approve of your intention to adjust WAC 246-290-460 to follow the recommendations of the US Department of Health and Human Services to support community water fluoridation for the prevention of tooth decay. Community water fluoridation remains one of the most effective, inexpensive and safe ways to prevent tooth decay and improve public health.

People of all ages suffer when they experience dental disease. Water fluoridation has been proven to benefit people of all ages and income levels by helping to reduce cavities by at least 25 percent over a person's lifetime – saving money, eliminating pain and preventing dental disease complications. This is especially important because access to affordable dental care continues to be one of the greatest unmet health needs in our state.¹ Though fluoridation cannot substitute for preventive care, adults living in communities that fluoridate are less likely to have oral disease and more likely to keep all of their teeth.²

For 70 years community water fluoridation has helped prevent tooth decay. In Washington State, the first water system began to provide fluoride to community drinking water 60 years ago. Every Surgeon General over the past 50 years has recommended fluoridation and it is also endorsed by the American Dental Association, American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is the most highly recommended and proven foundation for good oral health.

Thank you for your focus on improving oral health for Washington residents. We encourage the Board of Health to adopt the optimal standard of 0.7 mg/L as recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the prevention of tooth decay.

Sincerely,

Alexandria Desautel
Executive Director

¹ Washington State Hospital Emergency Room Use Report: <http://www.wsha.org/files/127/ERreport.pdf>;

Veteran's Resource Committee Strategic Plan: <http://www.co.clark.wa.us/veterans/Documents/2012VRCStrategicPlanFinal.pdf>;

Snohomish County Low-income Needs Assessment;

http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/documents/Departments/Human_Services/Community/2010_Snohomish_County_LowIncome_Needs_Assessment_Report-Final.pdf

² Fluoridated Water Helps Older Adults Keep Teeth, Study Says. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/31/health/fluoridated-water-helps-older-adults-keep-teeth-study-says.html?_r=0