Dear Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment Committee Members,

We are reaching out to you regarding House Bill 81 which addresses provisions related to water fluoridation and prescription fluoride supplements.  To help you prepare for discussion about this bill in the upcoming committee meeting, key points regarding this bill are listed below.  Also, attached you will find a additional information about water fluoridation as well as references to credible web sites for further information.

* Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in various amounts naturally in Utah and other areas.  The fluoride put in water is classified as a mineral, not a medicine.
* According to CDC, community water fluoridation is one of the top 10 public health accomplishments of the 20th century.   It benefits children and adults of all demographics by reducing dental decay by an average of 25% annually.
* Currently Salt Lake County, Davis County and Brigham City (since 1965) are the only areas in Utah that have community water fluoridation which is monitored to ensure the safe, recommended level.  These three areas represent about half of the population of Utah.
* For decades, community water fluoridation nationwide has been proven to provide significant overall health benefits by greatly reducing oral disease and decreasing overall health costs both privately and for Medicaid. After over 70 years of use in the US, it has proven safe to administer at the recommended level for the public and to handle by water system operators who follow OSHA guidelines.
* A decision to eliminate community water fluoridation for Utah would have serious consequences and would result in many Utahns losing the benefits they receive today from community water fluoridation.  Benefits of community water fluoridation include:
  + Reduction of tooth decay for all children and adults.
  + Reduction in oral health treatment costs - studies have shown that community water fluoridation reduces oral health costs by $32 -$45 per year per person.  For every 1 million individuals who have community water fluoridation in their area, there is an annual savings of $32-45 million.
  + Reduction in missed days of school and work.
    - Children with recent dental pain are 3 times more likely to be absent from school. Children with recent dental pain are 4 times more likely to earn lower grades.
    - Adults with more dental health problems are more likely to be unemployed. Adults who have lost teeth are more likely to be employed temporarily rather than having a full-time job
* Community water fluoridations importance to national security
  + Because dental disease has been a significant reason why many soldiers are non-deployable, the Department of Defense (DoD) requires water systems of US military installations with over 3,300 personnel to be fluoridated.
    - 'With the current scientific evidence supporting the benefits of fluoride in preventing dental decay for all ages, to include adults, it is critical that the DoD provides this proven public health benefit.  This will ensure improved readiness and health for Active-Duty personnel.' (July 18, 2011 - Assistant Secretary of Defense)
* In Utah, by law, the addition of or removal of water fluoridation must be the result of a vote, as was the case in each of the three areas mentioned.   As recently as 2023, Brigham City citizens voted by a 2 to 1 margin, to continue providing water fluoridation. Utah Code Section 19-4-111 states 'Except as provided in Subsection [(7)](https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title19/Chapter4/19-4-S111.html#19-4-111(7)) or Subsection [19-4-104(1)(a)(i)](https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title19/Chapter4/19-4-S104.html?v=C19-4-S104_2020051220200512#19-4-104(1)(a)(i)), public water supplies, whether state, county, municipal, or district, may not have fluoride added to or removed from the water supply without the approval of a majority of voters in an election in the area affected.'  House Bill 81 would take away the voter choice in our counties and municipalities and their ability to directly impact local decisions about community water fluoridation.
* House Bill 81 suggests an alternative to community water fluoridation with the dispensing of prescription fluoride by pharmacists.  This alternative is problematic.   Studies have shown that supplemental fluoride, even when controlled by a dentist or physician, has very poor compliance.  Control and monitoring is difficult, resulting in the frequent incidence of overdosing or underdosing.  The American Pediatric Association now only recommends supplemental fluoride for high-risk children in non-fluoridated areas. Fluoride pills are formulated only for those 6 months to 16 years of age and are known to be less effective than community water fluoridation.  Adults are typically not candidates for supplemental fluoride and so this would result in over a million fewer adults getting the health benefits of fluoride.   The average national cost to fluoridate water for a year is $1/person compared to $30-45 per person for supplemental fluoride.
* Fluoridating the water is the safest most controlled method of dispensing fluoride.   It is also the best biologically, as small doses periodically during the day gives the most benefit with the lowest dose.   Community water fluoridation is proven to be the best delivery method.
* Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of children and adults in the United States. The removal of community water fluoridation in Utah will negatively impact many individuals and families with the greatest negative impact on those who have the least access to oral healthcare in Utah today.
* A resolution supporting community water fluoridation in Utah was unanimously passed by the Utah Dental Association (UDA) House of Delegated on January 24, 2025, which included representatives of all UDA districts in Utah.
* The Utah Oral Health Coalition supports community water fluoridation in Utah. Members of this coalition include representatives of over 40 oral health and health related organizations in Utah.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please reply to this email and you will be contacted by someone on the Utah Oral Health Coalition.

Thank you for your service at our House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

Lorna L. Koci, Chair, Utah Oral Health Coalition

Utah Oral Health Coalition, Steering Committee Members

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