

September 6, 2012

TO: Mayor Sam Adams
Portland City Council members

FROM: Katrina Hedberg, M.D., M.P.H.,
State Epidemiologist, and Chief Science Officer
Public Health Division, Oregon Health Authority

Subject: Support for fluoridation of Portland's drinking water

Mayor Adams and Portland City Council members; I am Dr. Katrina Hedberg, State Epidemiologist and Chief Science Officer at the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority. I am here today to offer strong support for fluoridation of Portland's drinking water as an evidence-based method to prevent tooth decay.

Tooth decay is a serious problem and fluoridation is an effective, affordable and, most importantly, **safe** way to improve the public's health. It is also consistent with the state's effort to focus health care on prevention rather than after-the-fact acute care.

Despite Oregon's advancements in improving health and access to health care services, we rank 48th among states in the percent of our population on fluoridated public drinking water systems.

As a result, we are in a dental health crisis in Oregon. Our "Smile Survey" results show that among Oregon first- through third-grade children, 64 percent of kids had cavities, 36 percent had untreated tooth decay, and 20 percent, or one in five, had rampant decay (seven or more decayed teeth). We rank near the bottom of states in the U.S. on children's dental health.

Community water fluoridation can make huge improvements in oral health. Fluoridation is the most important intervention we have at our disposal to ensure optimal dental health in the community, particularly of children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.