
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO A NON-BINDING REFERENDUM ON STATEWIDE COMMUNITY
WATER FLUORIDATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii has the
2 lowest rate of access to fluoridated water in the nation. In
3 this State, only military installments provide fluoridated
4 drinking water. This low rate of access to fluoridated water is
5 one contributor to Hawaii's poor dental health outcomes.
6 Oral diseases tend to be progressive and cumulative.
7 Persistent poor dental health can cause or contribute to chronic
8 pain and poor lifelong general health outcomes by limiting an
9 individual's ability to eat, choose healthy foods, and
10 communicate. All of these factors can compromise an
11 individual's appearance, economic productivity, and ability to
12 function effectively at home, at school, and on the job.
13 Fluoride functions to minimize tooth decay in two ways.
14 Prior to the appearance of baby teeth and adult teeth in
15 children, fluoride absorbed in the bloodstream becomes part of
16 developing tooth enamel. After the appearance of teeth,



1 fluoride comes in direct contact with exterior tooth enamel.
2 Both means of fluoride delivery help to strengthen tooth enamel,
3 making it stronger and more resistant to decay.

4 According to Healthy Smiles Hawaii, children in Hawaii have
5 nearly double the rate of tooth decay than their mainland
6 counterparts. In fact, Hawaii children ages five through nine
7 have an average of four decayed teeth each. The Hawaii Health
8 Performance Plan reports that fewer than twenty per cent of six
9 year olds in Hawaii bear cavity-free permanent teeth, compared
10 to over ninety-four per cent of mainland children of the same
11 age.

12 The rates of tooth decay and dental caries are even higher
13 for children and adults who are part of disadvantaged social
14 groups. Poverty and a lack of access to sufficient dental
15 insurance are strong predictors of poor lifetime dental health,
16 which can start in infancy or early childhood and reverberate
17 throughout a lifetime. According to the Hawaii Health-
18 Performance Plan, over twenty per cent of Native Hawaiian five-
19 year olds, and more than thirty-two per cent of both Filipino
20 and Molokai five year olds, have significant cavities in their
21 baby teeth, known as baby bottle tooth decay.



1 Community water fluoridation can have an especially
2 significant impact on disadvantaged populations since it
3 delivers fluoride with virtually no cost and no effort to
4 children and adults who lack access to sufficient dental care
5 due to cost, education, and time constraints. Since all people
6 drink water and consume foods prepared with water, every
7 individual in a community with fluoridated water automatically
8 benefits from it. Studies show that individuals who live in
9 communities with sufficient fluoride concentration in drinking
10 water have twenty to forty per cent less tooth decay.

11 Because community water fluoridation, the process of
12 adjusting the naturally occurring fluoride levels to that
13 recommended by dental health organizations, has effects that are
14 both wide-ranging and very personal, the legislature finds that
15 the people of Hawaii deserve to have their voices heard on this
16 very important issue. The purpose of this Act is to ask the
17 electorate, through a non-binding, statewide referendum, whether
18 Hawaii should pursue community water fluoridation.

19 This ballot question should be posed to the electorate of
20 every county in the State.



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1 SECTION 2. The office of elections shall cause to be
 2 printed upon the ballot for the general election of 2020 the
 3 following question as a non-binding referendum:

4 "Shall the State pursue policies and programs for community
 5 water fluoridation, which is the process of adjusting the
 6 naturally occurring fluoride levels to that recommended by
 7 dental health organizations, in order to improve the
 8 overall dental health of Hawaii's residents?"

9 The ayes and noes on the question shall be tabulated and
 10 reported by the office of elections in the same manner as
 11 provided by law for a constitutional amendment.

12 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

13

INTRODUCED BY: *Michael Apurua*
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H.B. NO. 577

Report Title:

Community Water Fluoridation; Non-binding Referendum

Description:

Proposes a non-binding, statewide referendum on whether the State should pursue policies and programs for community water fluoridation in order to improve the overall dental health of Hawaii's children and adults.

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