



# The case for statewide water fluoridation in Oregon

A briefing paper prepared by the Oregon Dental Association on House Bill 2025

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This paper briefly reviews the benefits of House Bill 2025, requiring Oregon communities of more than 10,000 people to add optimal amounts of fluoride to water supplies. Despite nearly 60 years of research that proves the safety and effectiveness of fluoridation in preventing cavities, **only about 20 percent of Oregonians drink fluoridated water.** The result is a devastating effect on the health of our state's most vulnerable populations. Research shows that each dollar invested in fluoridation saves \$38 in dental care costs.

## Why is fluoridation necessary?

In his report, *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*, David Satcher, MD, PhD noted that **tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease**—five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever. Dr. Satcher's report characterizes dental disease as a "silent epidemic" and there is ample evidence that Oregon suffers from its share of this problem. For example, in *Smile Survey 2002*, the Oregon Department of Human Services found:

- more than 50 percent of Oregon's children suffer from dental decay and 25 percent have decay that has not been treated;
- children who qualify for free and reduced-price meal programs in school have substantially higher rates of decay and are more likely not to be treated;
- decay is more common among children of color and among children in non-English speaking households.

Fluoride reduces tooth decay in two important ways. When ingested, it is incorporated into the enamel of developing teeth before they erupt, making them more resistant to decay. After teeth erupt, topical fluoride continues to strengthen tooth structure to prevent decay and promote the remineralization of enamel. Decay occurring along the gum line and on root surfaces, usually seen in older patients, is also decreased by fluoride use.

Fluoridation is considered beneficial by the overwhelming majority of health and scientific communities, including the American Dental Association, the American Medical Association, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nearly 100 national and international

organizations endorse community water fluoridation, and every U.S. Surgeon General since 1950 has endorsed fluoridation. After nearly 60 years of research and experience, the vast weight of scientific evidence shows that fluoridation is safe and effective.

Since its introduction in 1945, fluoridation has grown to protect more than 360 million people in approximately 60 countries worldwide. More than 10,000 communities and 145 million people in the United States drink fluoridated water every day.

Fluoridation is a community health measure that protects **all** children and adults, regardless of income, education, or ethnicity—not just those with access to dental care. Research shows that each dollar spent on optimal water fluoridation returns \$38 in dental care savings.

## What would HB 2025 do?

About 20 percent of Oregonians drink fluoridated water. Oregon ranks **48th out of 50 states** in terms of the percentage of citizens who drink water that has been adjusted with optimal amounts of fluoride (0.7 to 1.2 parts per million). Only New Jersey and Hawaii fare worse.

HB 2025 would require all municipal water systems serving 10,000 or more customers to adjust the level of fluoride in drinking water to optimum levels. According to the Oregon Department of Human Services, 54 water systems meet or exceed the 10,000-customer threshold. If the proposal is fully implemented, around 2.4 million Oregonians would drink optimally fluoridated water—or about 66 percent of the state's population (see reverse).

## Comparison of current Oregon fluoridation status with effect of HB 2025

<b>Water systems CURRENTLY adding fluoride</b>	
Albany, City of .....	39,000
Beaverton, City of .....	62,000
Coos Bay/North Bend Water Board .....	37,000
Corvallis, City of .....	52,000
Dallas, City of .....	13,270
Forest Grove, City Of .....	16,275
Keizer, City of .....	30,000
Lebanon, City of .....	13,000
McMinnville Water & Light .....	24,800
Salem Public Works .....	170,000
Suburban East Salem Water District .....	12,000
The Dalles, City of .....	12,250
Tualatin Valley Water District .....	158,000
Subtotal .....	639,595
Systems <10,000 subscribers adding fluoride .....	88,874
<b>Total Oregon population served .....</b>	<b>728,469</b>
<b>Percentage of Oregon population served** .....</b>	<b>20.3%</b>

<b>Water systems adding fluoride IF HB 2025 passes</b>	
Albany, City of .....	39,000
Ashland Water Department .....	19,770
Avion Water Department .....	16,660
Beaverton, City of .....	62,000
Bend Water Department .....	31,000
Canby Utility .....	14,000
Central Point, City of .....	12,230
Clackamas River Water — Clackamas .....	35,100
Clackamas River Water — Clairmont .....	14,700
Coos Bay/North Bend Water Board .....	37,000
Corvallis, City of .....	52,000
Dallas, City of .....	13,270
Deschutes Valley Water District .....	12,000
Eugene Water & Electric Board .....	161,000
Forest Grove, City of .....	16,275
Gladstone, City of .....	13,500
Grants Pass, City of .....	24,000
Gresham PWO — Water Section .....	42,741
Hermiston, City of .....	14,120
Hillsboro & JWC Plant .....	79,340
Keizer, City of .....	30,000
Klamath Falls Water Department .....	38,000
La Grande, City of .....	12,700
Lake Oswego Municipal Water .....	33,145
Lebanon, City of .....	13,000
Lincoln City Water District .....	14,013
McMinnville Water & Light .....	24,800
Medford Water Commission .....	82,331
Milwaukie, City of .....	20,050
North Clackamas County Water Commission .....	28,000
Newberg Water District .....	17,310
Ontario, City of .....	11,140
Oregon City-South Fork .....	26,217
Pendleton, City of .....	16,200
Portland Bureau of Water Works .....	456,000
Powell Valley Road Water District .....	39,000
Redmond Water Department .....	11,995
Rockwood Water District .....	53,250
Roseburg, City of — Winchester .....	26,660
Salem Public Works .....	170,000
Sherwood, City of .....	12,230
Springfield Utility Board .....	51,674
St. Helens, City of .....	10,500
Suburban East Salem Water District .....	12,000
Sunise Water Authority .....	30,000
The Dalles, City of .....	12,250
Tigard, City of .....	47,000
Troutdale, City of .....	14,300
Tualatin Valley Water District .....	158,000
Tualatin, City of .....	24,100
West Linn, City of .....	23,380
West Slope Water District .....	12,500
Wilsonville, City of .....	15,590
Woodburn, City of .....	20,000
Subtotal .....	2,277,041
Systems <10,000 subscribers adding fluoride .....	88,874
<b>Total Oregon population served .....</b>	<b>2,365,915</b>
<b>Percentage of Oregon population served** .....</b>	<b>66.0%</b>

\*Statistics do not include water systems in which the natural fluoride content of the drinking water >0.7 parts per million

\*\*Based on statewide population estimate of 3,582,600.