



NORTHERNRIVERS

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TESTIMONY OF
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NORTHERN RIVERS FAMILY OF SERVICES

PRESENTED TO THE
ALBANY COMMON COUNCIL

REGARDING
LOCAL LAW K

FEBRUARY 22, 2024

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Summary of Recommendations-Highly Recommend Passage of Local Law K

- Many research studies have proven the safety and benefits of fluoridated water. For 75 years people in the United States have been drinking water with added fluoride and enjoying the benefits of better dental health.
- Drinking fluoridated water keeps teeth strong and reduces cavities (also called tooth decay) by about 25% in children and adults. By preventing cavities, community water fluoridation has been shown to save money both for families and for the US health care system.
- Oral health in the United States is much better today than it was many years ago; however, cavities are still one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood. Community water fluoridation is the most efficient and cost-effective way to deliver fluoride to everyone in a community, regardless of their age, income, or education.
- Most water contains some fluoride but usually not enough to prevent cavities. Community water systems can add just the right amount of fluoride to local drinking water to prevent cavities.
- Community water fluoridation is recommended by nearly all public health, medical, and dental organizations. It is recommended by the American Dental Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, US Public Health Service, and World Health Organization.

Good evening. My name is William Gettman, and I am the CEO of Northern Rivers Family of Services located in the Capital Region.

About Northern Rivers Family of Services

Northern Rivers Family of Services was established in 2012 through affiliation with longstanding family services agencies Northeast Parent & Child Society and Parsons Child & Family Center. Together, the 1,400-strong workforce of Northern Rivers and member agencies serve more than 18,000 children and families in 41 upstate counties each year. Northern Rivers builds a strong, successful, and healthy future for our children, families, and communities through quality services, collaboration, and innovative leadership. Our program areas include:

- Residential and community-based child welfare programming including foster care, preventive services, postadoption services, and evidence-based home visiting programs;
- Educational services for 400 students including early learning, pre-K, and Early Head Start, as well as accredited 853 schools (elementary, middle, and high school);
- Community-based child welfare and crisis services programs for children and adults including mobile crisis, school-based services, and licensed clinic programs; and
- Community-based waiver programs for children and adults including health home services.

I would like to thank the Leadership, Committee Chairs and Members of the Council for this opportunity to testify on Local Law K.

“What do we owe to the members of our community who need help? Those who struggle with poverty, neglect, mental health challenges, substance abuse, lack of adequate health care, housing, domestic violence, or other issues that make it harder for them simply to survive in this world-- if we believe in creating a positive, healthier, and more successful future for our children and communities, we must invest, innovate and resist efforts to maintain the status quo.”

The Facts versus the Myths

- Americans have been drinking fluoridated water for over 70 years, and there is overwhelming evidence showing it is both safe and effective.
- **Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease for kids and adults. Children with dental pain are 3 times more likely to be absent from school. And they are 4 times more likely to earn lower grades. Adults with dental pain often are forced to miss work or endure excruciating pain. Water fluoridation would help us prevent tooth decay from happening.**
- The most respected health and medical organizations in our country endorse water fluoridation. These include the largest organizations of pediatricians and family physicians. We should put our trust into these organizations since they have the experts who review the science. It is their job to conduct and interpret research and they have been studying this issue for over 75 years.
- Almost 73% of the US on community water system receive fluoridated water. In NY, that is about 70%. Schenectady, Troy, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, Binghamton, Watertown, Potsdam, Yonkers, New York City and many other cities have community water fluoridation. It is about time Albany joined them. The people of Albany should have this important health benefit that so many in the state already enjoy.
- Some people say that fluoridated water isn't necessary if people brush with fluoride toothpaste. But this is a myth. The people who have studied this say that both forms of fluoride are complementary. It's like air bags and seatbelts — both of them are important.

Conclusion

Water fluoridation substantially reduces the prevalence and incidence of dental issues in primary and permanent teeth. Lack of access to fluoridation impacts low income families and children and can create negative long term dental impacts. We strongly recommend passage of Local Law K.