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Dr Michael Donohoo testimony
Common Council Steering and Rules Committee
Milwaukee Fluoride Issue
May 31, 2012

Good afternoon members of the Steering and Rules Committee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today to share my views in support of continued fluoridation of the Milwaukee Public Water System.

My name is Michael Donohoo and I've been a lifelong resident of the Milwaukee area where my wife and I raised five children and now have been blessed with five grandchildren -- all of whom are in the area and who wholeheartedly drink Milwaukee municipal water. My deceased father Stanley practiced dentistry for 57 years with most of those years spent on 27th & Wells. My partner Monica Hebl and I moved the practice in the year 2000 to 76th & Burleigh since we remain committed to my father's dedication of serving the Medicaid population in the Milwaukee area. In addition I am a past president of both the Greater Milwaukee Dental Association and the Wisconsin Dental Association and am representing our 3,000+ statewide members today who comprise over 85% of the dentists in the state of Wisconsin.

I am here to express the importance of community water fluoridation and to let you know how I feel it benefits all people from birth and moving forward. I will leave the detailed science aspects to other speakers, but urge all the committee members to critically examine all organizations and their respective scientific protocols mentioned today -- proponents and opponents of community water fluoridation both.

I love the fact that water fluoridation makes prevention of cavities so much easier for all individuals. It's very accessible, even for the poorest of families. Our profession stresses the importance of good daily oral hygiene habits starting from the time the first tooth appears in a baby's mouth all the way to the end of our lives. Proper nutrition is made so much easier if the dentition is properly cared for from an early age on and I believe fluoride plays a critical role in that equation. Is water fluoridation the be all and end all? No. If it were, I would see very little dental decay in my practice. However, I do believe it's one of the critical pieces in the fight to maintain great community wide oral health. The US Surgeon General recognizes oral health as critical to overall well being.

Studies prove water fluoridation reduces tooth decay by 25 percent (a conservative estimate) throughout one's lifetime and community water fluoridation is the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay and to improve oral health overall for children, their families and for all of us. Drinking optimally-fluoridated water during the pre-eruptive tooth development stages for children reduces their risk for cavities. Continued fluoridation of Milwaukee's water supply is the easiest and most economical way to help young and old in this city with just one simple oral health preventive measure.

A critic could easily ask, "Why do kids get any cavities at all if they drink fluoridated water?" If only it were that easy. I've learned as a dental health professional that my reach only goes so far. If we could

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stop families from pounding down sugared soda, sugared juices, sucking on peppermints and hard candies and the like , we could make a huge dent in the cavity load of our population.

It's easy to look at a rather rotund person slowly jogging down the road and think (like some people do), "What a waste of time; it's obviously not doing them any good!"

A more appropriate way to look at it is, "How big was that person before he or she started exercising or rather how much bigger and unhealthier would they become if they weren't out jogging for exercise?"

I look at water fluoridation in somewhat the same way. It can't and won't stop all cavity problems but God forbid, if you take it out of the municipal water supply what problems are all of you going to be leaving behind for future generations of Milwaukee citizens?

For thirty two years I've been in the front lines of trying to help restore patients of all ages to a state of dental health and quite honestly this resolution is so discouraging to me. I'm glad it's myself testifying today and not my father especially since he witnessed the transformation from pre-fluoride community water to post-fluoride water and he wouldn't be as civil as I've tried to remain today.

Chairman Hines, I thank you and all members of the committee for your attention today.