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House of Representatives State of Tennessee

NASHVILLE

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Lawrenceburg Utility Systems
P. O. Box 649
Lawrenceburg TN 38464

Dear Board Members:

As a legislator and practicing physician serving in the Tennessee Legislature, I am writing this letter to advise you of my recommendation that water districts in Tennessee no longer add fluoride to drinking water supplies. Much information is now coming out showing that the health risks associated with drinking fluoridated water significantly outweigh fluoride's limited cavity-fighting action. Many physicians and dentists are unaware of the recent, disturbing information about fluoridation:

1. It is now acknowledged by dental and federal health authorities that fluoride's primary action in helping to prevent cavities is topical – when the fluoride touches teeth surfaces in the mouth. This news has come out only in the past few years and is extremely significant. Water districts and health professionals originally supported fluoridation because it was believed it was important fluoride be ingested internally, so it could be used by the body to build strong, cavity-resistant teeth. Now that we know that the primary way fluoride helps prevent cavities is topically, while in the mouth, it no longer makes sense to continue absorbing it into every organ in our bodies, over our entire lifetimes, especially when new government information acknowledges concerns for fluoride's toxic cumulative effects on teeth and bones, and when people can simply use fluoridated

toothpaste if desired, and spit out the fluoride. Also, evidence is now strong that teeth sealants on children's teeth are dramatically more effective than fluoride in preventing children's cavities.

2. Water fluoridation is medication added to water, as fluoride is the only substance water districts add to water to treat a health condition in our bodies. This addition of medication to water is done without first obtaining informed consent from citizens. Much of the rest of the world refuses to fluoridate water because of this issue alone. Fluoridation also assumes a "one size fits all" approach – not taking into account variations in people's total dose ingested or people's varying health status. Fluoride affects the thyroid, the kidneys, the bones and joints, the nervous system, and our immune systems. Giving an unmeasured amount of fluoride through drinking water and not monitoring people's response to it makes no sense at all and violates fundamental principles of toxicology, pharmacology, and ethics.
3. The National Research Council has acknowledged that infants and young children are receiving 3 – 4 times the dose of fluoride as do adults, on a body weight basis. This is very disturbing, as young children's cells are rapidly dividing and are particularly susceptible to ingested toxins. Even the American Dental Association has recently recommended that infant milk formula NOT be made with fluoridated water. If fluoridation continues in Tennessee, who is going to pay for poor families to use bottled water for formula mixing, or pay to buy these families an expensive filtration system to remove fluoride from their water? On top of this, how will all mothers and caregivers who need this information obtain it?

The ADA says its recommendation is aimed at preventing "cosmetic" fluorosis of teeth. The Centers for Disease Control revealed that 32% of school kids now have some form of dental fluorosis, and that moderate and severe dental fluorosis affects nearly 2% of whites and 3-4% of minority folks ages 6 -39. To think that fluoride affects *only* infants' teeth forming cells and somehow miraculously spares all other cells from harm simply strains credulity. Fluoridation also ignores the citizens who have severe dental fluorosis, which is *not* a cosmetic effect but *an adverse health effect that is disproportionately harming minorities*.

You may be told that a number of federal agencies and dental associations still support fluoridation as safe and effective. A number of other countries think otherwise, and a growing number of cities, scientists, and health professionals in the United States are also rejecting fluoridation. The reason fluoridation continues today is due to forces other than the support of good science behind it.

The decision to fluoridate is completely voluntary on the part of each water system. There is no requirement to add fluoride and with the new evidence of possible risks to various organs in the body and the very limited benefit of continued fluoridation, it would be prudent for each water system to weigh all the evidence concerning risks to the water customers they serve. There has also recently been a recommendation to decrease the recommended level of fluoride added to the water so now is a good time to end the practice altogether. I commend you as a Board member for considering the removal of fluoride for the safety of your customers. While this has been a practice for 60 years in the United States, I believe it would never be allowed to be instituted in today's society with our increased safety standards. You will save money and improve the health of your water customers if you remove fluoride from your water system. I would urge you to end the practice of adding fluoride for the welfare of your friends and neighbors. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have; even though I am certainly no expert on the subject, I have carefully studied the evidence and I believe you will come to the same conclusions. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joey Hensley MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joey Hensley MD
State Representative