

**Testimony of the Kansas Dental Hygienists' Association
In opposition to HB 2372: Requiring Fluoride Warning
House Health and Human Services
Wednesday, February 19, 2014**

Thank you Chairman Crum and members of the committee for this opportunity to submit comments on behalf of the Kansas Dental Hygienists Association (KDHA). My name is Ron Gaches, legislative counsel for KDHA. Our association represents Registered Dental Hygienists from across Kansas in all possible practice venues; private practice in Dental Offices, Safety Net Clinics, public schools, city and county health departments and academia.

KDHA members strongly support the practice of fluoridation of our public water supply and believe HB 2372 will unnecessarily and improperly alarm Kansans about the safety of drinking fluoridated water.

Evidence of the effectiveness and safety of fluoridating public water is overwhelming, notwithstanding the allegations of the bill's proponents. Fluoride has been added to our public water supplies for decades without incidence, and the fears of those opposed to fluoride are unfounded when it is used as intended.

Fluoridating water prevents cavities. There is a direct causal effect. Untreated cavities can cause pain, dysfunction, school and work absences, difficulty concentrating and poor appearance, eventually impacting a person's ability to succeed.

There are many opportunities to reduce fluoride exposure if a person genuinely believes it poses a threat. Fluoride is routinely available in toothpaste, bottled water and other products. It is easy to reduce or eliminate fluoride exposure from these other sources if a person wishes to.

What we shouldn't do is reduce the use of fluoride in our water supply to control people's exposure. For many families of lower socio-economic status, fluoride exposure through the water supply is the most cost effective way to control cavities. Discouraging fluoride use by printing unnecessary health warnings on water bills does a disservice to those who lack the resources to see a dentist or access fluoride from other sources.

Finally, Dental Hygienists are experts in preventive oral health. They understand the science and history of fluoride use. If we had any question about the safety of fluoride use in public water supplies we would urge support for this bill. But we do not and we urge you to not advance this proposal.