

# Resolution 43: Fluoridation of Cornell's Water Supply

**Abstract:** Urging Cornell University to fluoridate its own potable water system, support the fluoridation of Ithaca waters, and bring awareness to the current lack of fluoridation so that students have the autonomy to make informed decisions regarding their oral health.

**Sponsored by:** Constance Newell '24

**Reviewed by:** Student Assembly Executive Committee (5-0-1) 04/24/2023

**Type of Action:** Recommendation

**Originally Presented:** 04/27/2023

**Current Status:** New Business

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**Whereas,** of the 73% of Americans that have access to public fluoridated water, Ithaca residents are not among them. <sup>1</sup>

**Whereas,** water fluoridation is the practice of adding fluoride to the public water supply in order to improve dental health and prevent tooth decay (carries).

**Whereas,** the benefits of water fluoridation in reducing carries have been documented through various studies, with one such study published in the Journal of Public Health revealing that water fluoridation on average reduces carries by ~25% in children and adults, even in the presence of alternative fluoride methods, such as toothpaste.<sup>2</sup>

**Whereas,** the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes water fluoridation as one of the most significant public health achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

**Whereas,** despite the resounding support from nationally recognized health organizations, water fluoridation continues to be a contentious issue in Ithaca with a provision against government-sanctioned fluoride even existing in the city charter; Section 35: "... shall not enact or enforce any local law or ordinance or resolution for any purpose pertaining in any manner to the fluoridation of the water."<sup>4</sup>

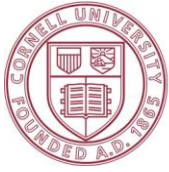
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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/statistics/index.htm#:~:text=Water%20Fluoridation%20Data%20%26%20Statistic,s,-Print&text=In%202018%2C%2073.0%25%20of%20the,had%20access%20to%20fluoridated%20water.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2681730/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://blogs.cdc.gov/pcd/2015/04/23/community-water-fluoridation-one-of-the-10-greatest-public-health-achievements-of-the-20th-century/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ecode360.com/8385254>



## Cornell University Student Assembly

26 **Whereas**, on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the city of Ithaca held a vote on two propositions pertaining to  
27 water fluoridation. The first ballot which would amend the city charter to give the Common  
28 Council the power to fluoridate the water supply, was opposed by 52%. The second, which was a  
29 vote on the actual fluoridation of water, was opposed by 54%. This was the first and last time  
30 that a water fluoridation referendum was balloted.<sup>5</sup>

31 **Whereas**, a survey across upstate NY revealed that 28-38% of adults do not receive routine  
32 professional dental care.<sup>6</sup>

33 **Whereas**, this is concerning as more than 90% of all systemic diseases induce oral symptoms  
34 that can be identified by a dentist during routine oral exams, such as cancers, osteoporosis,  
35 AIDS, and anemia.<sup>7</sup>

36 **Whereas**, poor oral health can lead to other health issues such as diabetes and chronic heart  
37 disease.<sup>8</sup>

38 **Whereas**, fluoridation of the Ithaca water supply would be a cost-effective way to provide  
39 equitable dental care.

40 **Whereas**, it is relatively inexpensive to add fluoride to water.

41 **Whereas**, the average cost per year for U.S. communities to fluoridate the water ranges from  
42 \$.50 per person for large communities to \$3.00 per person for small communities.<sup>9</sup>

43 **Whereas**, the average cost of a single dental filling is ~\$200.<sup>10</sup>

44 **Whereas**, the average lifetime cost per person to fluoridate water supply is less than the cost of  
45 just one dental filling.<sup>11</sup>

46 **Whereas**, water fluoridation would be particularly beneficial to those who may not have access  
47 to regular dental care or may not be able to afford comprehensive dental treatments.

48 **Whereas**, for most municipalities, every \$1 invested in water fluoridation saves \$38 in dental  
49 treatment.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://ithacavoice.org/2015/08/explainer-6-questions-about-ithacas-decades-long-fluoride-debate/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bcbs.com/press-releases/survey-of-dental-care-across-upstate-ny-found-many-adults-didnt-visit-dentist-the>

<sup>7</sup> <https://northshorefamilydentistry.com/services/oral-exams/#:~:text=According%20to%20statistics%2C%20more%20than,of%20an%20underlying%20medical%20condition.>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/index.html>

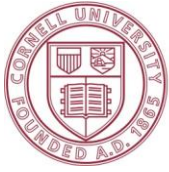
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ada.org/resources/community-initiatives/fluoride-in-water/fluoridation-faqs>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.byte.com/community/resources/article/cavity-filling-costs-2021-with-without-insurance/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/basics/cost.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4457131/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4457131/>



Cornell University  
Student Assembly

50 **Whereas**, fluoridation of Ithaca waters would ensure that students and residents from all walks  
51 of life have access to basic preventative care, regardless of their income or insurance status.

52 **Whereas**, many students are still unaware of the lack of fluoride in Ithaca waters.

53 **Whereas**, it is the Student Assembly’s “responsibility to examine any matters which involve the  
54 interests or concern the welfare of the student community.”

55 **Be it therefore resolved**, that the Student Assembly calls upon Cornell Health to create a  
56 campus-wide initiative on oral health, specifically addressing the lack of fluoridation of Ithaca  
57 water supply.

58 **Be it further resolved**, that Cornell University and The Tatkon Center inform all new and  
59 current students about Ithaca’s water fluoridation status so that they have the autonomy to make  
60 informed decisions regarding their oral health.

61 **Be it further resolved**, as a leading research institution, Cornell University supports sound  
62 scientific evidence and rejects misinformation with regards to water fluoridation.

63 **Be it further resolved**, that Cornell University urges Ithaca Common Council to reconsider their  
64 stance on water fluoridation.

65 **Be it finally resolved**, Cornell University fluoridates its own potable water system which serves  
66 campus and portions of the surrounding community.

67 **Respectfully Submitted,**

68 Constance Newell’24

69 *College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Representative, Student Assembly*