



Native American Youth and Family Center

5135 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland OR 97218 | p 503-288-8177 | f 503-288-1260 | www.nayapdx.org

April 3, 2013

Good afternoon Mayor and City Commissioners,

My name is Melissa Henderson, and I work for the Native American Youth and Family Center, or NAYA as it is known within the Portland community. I serve as a health systems navigator and advocate for the local Native American/Alaska Native community. I am here today to advocate for water fluoridation, a measure I feel will meaningfully address dental health inequity in our community.

In my role as a health navigator at NAYA, I help families connect with much needed health resources, and while I try to encourage preventative action, it's not always plausible. Our Native community is disproportionately poor, and experiences some of the highest rates of homelessness, poverty, unemployment, and health disparities among communities of color. For many of our vulnerable, options like healthy foods, fluoride treatments, and preventative dental care are beyond their reach and control. Our children are in pain, missing school, and falling behind their peers. For children like this, fluoride treatments in school come too late. This is not an unusual scenario. Native American preschoolers are five times more likely to have tooth decay than any other racial/ethnic group. More than 70 percent of 6-8 year old Native Americans have untreated cavities and Native teens have more than double the amount of permanent tooth decay when compared to their peers.

For every 10 families I serve, 9 are in desperate need of dental care. Some are able to get on Healthy Kids, but for many adults and elders, that's not a reality. The hardest part of my job is saying no. No I don't have any resources for you. No I can't help you with your tooth pain. No I don't know the answers. Supporting a preventative solution like water fluoridation is a way that I can be accountable to the community I serve and protect the next generation from the dental disparity that comes into my office every day.

At NAYA, we're working to even the playing field, but we need your help. This is more than a dental health issue to us – it's a social justice issue. Fluoridation is a preventative solution that would go far to help the Native American community, and indeed all Portlanders. Drinking fluoridated tap water is such a simple, easy way to protect Portland's youth, and give them a fair chance at a happy, healthy childhood and a greater chance at success in life.

Thank you,
Melissa Henderson, MPH
Health Care Youth Advocate

Empowering the lives of Native Americans in the Portland area

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Moore-Love, Karla

From: Melissa Henderson [Melissah@nayapdx.org]

Sent: Friday, March 08, 2013 10:42 AM

To: Moore-Love, Karla

Subject: Public Testimony

Dear Ms. Moore-Love,

I would like to sign up to provide public testimony at city hall.

Name: Melissa Henderson

Address: 1104 SW Gaines Street, Portland OR 97239

Phone: (520) 404-9896

Date Requesting: Wednesday, April 3, 2013

Topic: Water Fluoridation

Thank you,

Melissa

Melissa A. Henderson, MPH

Health Care Youth Advocate

Native American Youth and Family Center

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melissah@nayapdx.org



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"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." -
Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization, 1948

Request of Melissa Henderson to address Council regarding water fluoridation
(Communication)

APR 08 2013

PLACED ON FILE

MAR 29 2013

Filed _____

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By *Melissa Henderson*

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Novick		
Hales		