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MEMORANDUM

TO: Waterworks Advisory Committee Leadership, Office of Drinking Water

FROM: Sarah Bedard Holland, CEO, Virginia Health Catalyst

DATE: Wednesday, January 5, 2022

RE: House Bill 22

Virginia Health Catalyst's mission is to ensure everyone in the commonwealth has equitable access to comprehensive health care that includes oral health. I've reviewed the bill language from this lens and have concerns that lead me to oppose this bill's adoption strongly.

Notably, the language is vague and broad, which opens it up for multiple interpretations and abuse. I am concerned that water fluoridation (optimizing the amount of fluoride in water to prevent cavities) could be considered a medical mandate. Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral and is added to water by trained operators at the water system to be accessible to all recipients of the systems' water. Water fluoridation activities are proven to reduce tooth decay by over 25%.

Over 90% of Virginia's public water systems are fluoridated, which benefits nearly 6.7 million Virginians. Equitable access to fluoride is one reason why Virginians overall have less tooth decay than residents of most other states. Unfortunately, this bill, if passed, could lead to unnecessary barriers to water fluoridation activities and reduce access to life and health-saving fluoridated water.

Sincerely,

Sarah Holland
Chief Executive Officer