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New Legislation Will Help Children and Adults Living with FASD

SENATORS LISA MURKOWSKI AND AMY KLOBUCHAR AND
REPRESENTATIVES DON BACON AND BETTY MCCOLLUM INTRODUCE THE
FASD RESPECT ACT

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 12, 2023 – New bipartisan legislation will advance comprehensive Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) support services, public health prevention, and research programs across agencies within the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services.

The FASD Respect Act (S. 1800/H.R. 3946), introduced by Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Representatives Don Bacon (R-NE) and Betty McCollum (D-MN), would reauthorize federal FASD programs by directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish or continue a comprehensive FASD informed prevention, identification, intervention, and services delivery program.

FASD describes the range of lifelong physical, mental, and behavioral impairments that can occur in an individual prenatally exposed to alcohol. As reported in *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*, FASD affects as many as 1 in 20 school-age children in the U.S., and, according to a 2022 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report*, 1 in 7 pregnancies are exposed to alcohol. The estimated annual cost for each individual with FASD, including health care, special education, residential care, lost productivity, and juvenile and criminal justice expenses, is \$30,945, for a total annual cost to society of \$205 billion.

“FASD is a tragically overlooked crisis affecting millions of children and adults,” said FASD United President Tom Donaldson, “After 50 years of research and public health prevention measures, this landmark legislation will at long last begin to provide individuals and their families touched by FASD with the services and respect they deserve.”

FASD United Board Chair Susan Shepard Carlson, leading the effort to strengthen the current federal response to FASD, added, “As a country, we can and should do so much better for those with an FASD and their families. The FASD Respect Act will begin to bring much needed focus and resources to address systemically this huge societal problem. The FASD community thanks the Senate and House sponsors for leading the charge to enact this much needed bipartisan FASD legislation.”

Although there is no cure for FASD, research shows that FASD-specific early intervention services can improve developmental outcomes. Dr. Christie Petrenko, a member of the FASD United Board of Directors, observes, “Most people with FASD can’t access evidence-based diagnostic or intervention services. This creates a terrible burden for people with FASD and their families and negatively impacts their quality of life, the FASD Respect Act could help change that.”

FASD United is the public health advocacy nonprofit organization that serves as the national voice on FASD. For more information, visit www.FASDUnited.org.

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