Montreal, QC, H4L 1A7

April 28, 2024

Dear Social Affairs, Science and Technology committee,

I am writing to express my support for Bill S-253 *An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder,* and I am hopeful for your support as well.

According to the Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD), Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) currently affects 1 in 25 Canadians, and costs Canada approximately $9.7 billion every year. Despite the name, it is a lifelong condition with no cure. As alcohol is a toxin and teratogen that easily and quickly passes through the placenta and directly to the developing embryo or fetus, it leads to brain and nervous system damage of various levels of severity, as well as physical issues that can affect all organs.

In Canada, people struggle with access to FASD diagnostic clinics and clinicians. There is a lack of professionals equipped to diagnose and support individuals with FASD. School staff are not informed or equipped in how to best support students with FASD, even if they have received an accurate diagnosis.

More needs to be done to help individuals and families living with FASD to allow them to be full, active, and healthy members of society.

A national framework could include:

- Information campaigns on the dangers of alcohol consumption while pregnant (“Alcohol and pregnancy don’t mix.”)
- Increased substance abuse supports and treatments for pregnant or individuals wanting to become pregnant

- Professional training for medical professionals to be equipped to diagnose FASD early and use stigma/harm reduction practices
- Finding specialized and proven supports for FASD-specific issues (rather than the current approach of using techniques and treatments that work on other, unrelated diagnoses, but have dubious use or efficacy on FASD)

As an adoptive parent of a child with suspected FASD, I don't know what his future holds. He struggles with sensory and emotional regulation issues, as well as problems with speech and vision. Being able to access accurate diagnosis and classroom supports will make a huge difference in his long term success.

I also work as a Gladue Report Writer and witness firsthand the struggles of individuals suffering with FASD. Their ability to learn in a traditional school setting is often impeded, and they frequently struggle with substance abuse disorder. They often end up in and out of prison and their relationships and families suffer.

A national framework on FASD can help break the cycle and reduce the emotional and financial burden on Canadians. FASD is preventable when the correct societal and health safeguards are in place, but the framework must be developed first.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Johnson

Resident of Ville Saint Laurent, Quebec

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