

February 18, 2020

Assembly Select Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
State Capitol, Room 3091
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

Honorable Jim Frazier, Chair:

We represent all of the advocacy groups for children and adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) across the state of California, as well as professional providers, practitioners, experts and researchers who serve people with FASD and/or whose work addresses it. FASD is the most common known cause of developmental disability in the United States. Its prevalence is far higher than Autism.

FASD includes complex brain damage with a range of deficits in behavior, learning, language, cognition and adaptive function (skills needed in everyday life). In addition to the brain damage, over 400 health conditions have been found to occur in this population. Most individuals with FASD have a typical IQ while still showing significant difficulties in school, work and community; 80% of these people will not be able to live independently as adults. Having a typical IQ and FASD can lead to failure of detection and the inability to qualify for services, including the Regional Centers. Without needed support and services, youth and adults with FASD develop secondary disabilities, precipitating high rates of mental illness, substance use, incarceration and homelessness. The lifetime cost for a person with FASD is currently reported at 2 million dollars. Early diagnosis and specific intervention is critical to changing these poor outcomes. With FASD directed services, children with this disability can grow into adults who lead fulfilling, productive lives.

While California is often a national leader in terms of policy issues, it is not the case when it comes to FASD. Recognition of this disorder is limited. California has no action plan to address the needs of children and adults who have FASD. Large areas in the state do not even have diagnostic capacity and coordinated services are not in place. We believe the first step is for the legislature to create a task force on FASD in order to convene key stakeholders and experts, conduct a needs assessment and produce a set of recommendations and a proposed action plan for FASD in California. A California initiative would mirror action at the federal level to secure \$47 million for FASD with Senate Bill S. 2879, the Advancing FASD Research, Prevention and Services Act, that authorizes comprehensive FASD support, public health prevention and research programs across agencies within the US Departments of Health and Human Services, Education and Justice. It was introduced in the US Senate on November 18, 2019.

We appreciate your consideration and believe that once you read the enclosed position paper and executive summary outlining the impact of FASD, you will agree that it is time for California to address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and develop an action plan in response to this common, but often misunderstood disability.

NOFAS Southern California
NOFAS Northern California
FASD Sac Valley
FASD Collaborative, Santa Clara County
FASD Network of Southern California
