

NEWS RELEASE

The Canada FASD Research Network is thrilled by the introduction of Bill S-253: An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder

(Ottawa, October 19, 2022) The Canada FASD Research Network is thrilled by the introduction of [Bill S-253: An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder](#), today in the Senate of Canada by the Honourable Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia. A National FASD Strategy would go a long way in supporting equitable access to prevention, diagnostics, and support services across the provinces and territories.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is the leading cause of neurodevelopmental disability in Canada, affecting 4% of the population. With over 1.5M Canadians with FASD today, there are more Canadians with FASD than autism, cerebral palsy, and Down Syndrome combined. Not solely a healthcare issue, FASD intersects with homelessness, substance use, education, criminal justice, mental health, child welfare, social services, family health and more.

The statistics are staggering. Approximately 90% of people with FASD will experience at least one mental health challenge in their life. Their risk of suicide is 5.5 times higher than the general population and they are 20 times more likely to experience substance use challenges. When unsupported, people with FASD struggle to succeed in school, find a job, and maintain safe housing.

Representatives from the Canada FASD Research Network are in Ottawa this week for meetings with Members of Parliament, Senators and government officials to discuss initiatives to address FASD, as well as the need for a National FASD Strategy.

We would like to thank Senators Mohamed Iqbal-Ravalia and Pat Duncan for all of their leadership on this, and for being steadfast advocates for Canadians with FASD, their families, and their caregivers.

We encourage all Senators and Members of Parliament to show their support for this important piece of legislation.

Quotes:

“For too long, Canadians with FASD, their families and caregivers have been depending on informal and inequitable services and support to ensure they are able to reach their full potential. If passed, this Bill would ensure that their needs and recognized by public policy and programs, in addition to ensuring a coordinated and informed response when seeking to prevent instances of FASD.”

Audrey McFarlane, CanFASD Executive Director

“For years we’ve watched other disabilities like autism receive the dedicated support and funding that they need, while FASD went overlooked and under-supported, despite FASD being twice as common. This Bill is a huge win for families across Canada and a big step forward for FASD in our country.”

Alicia Munn, Parent

“As a rural family physician for over thirty-five years, I have seen first-hand that there is a need to have a coordinated, interdisciplinary approach to addressing the significant disparities in FASD prevention, diagnosis, interventions and supports. These disparities exist across Canada’s provinces and territories. Bill S-253 is one step in the right direction towards delivering equitable, culturally appropriate, and comprehensive care.”

Senator Mohamed Iqbal-Ravalia

“As a life-long Yukoner and a former member of the Yukon Legislature, I am fully familiar with efforts of the advocates of the Yukon FASD community. I am heartened by the introduction of Senator Ravalia’s bill. It is a comprehensive legislative proposal to assist those with, and affected by, FASD. A national framework will work to ensure best practices, national standards and coordination of research and services fundamental to fight FASD, which is so prevalent, yet preventable.”

Senator Pat Duncan

About CanFASD:

CanFASD is Canada’s first national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research network. CanFASD works collaboratively with researchers and partners across the nation



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to address complexities of FASD. Our mission is to produce and maintain national, collaborative research for all Canadians, leading to prevention strategies and improved support services for people affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

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For more information on CanFASD, please visit:

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