The latest studies estimate that 40,000 infants are born each year with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) — 1 out of every 100 births in the U.S.

FASD takes an enormous financial toll on affected families and society as a whole.

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) alone costs the United States $5.4 billion annually in direct and indirect costs.

Individual with full-blown FAS incur an average lifetime health cost of $860,000, although costs can be as high as $4.2 million.

Costs associated with FAS are just the tip of the iceberg. Individuals with FASD make up a much larger group and the total costs associated with FASD are estimated to be much higher.

Direct costs associated with FAS, estimated at $3.9 billion annually, include not only healthcare costs, but costs associated with social services and incarceration.

- Sixty percent of individuals with FASD will end up in an institution (mental health facility or prison).

- It is estimated that almost 70 percent of the children in foster care are affected by prenatal alcohol exposure in varying degrees.

“I have seen one family of children with full-blown FAS nearly bankrupt a county in my home state of Minnesota. The in-home care, special education, legal fees, and healthcare costs that the state was obligated to pay ran in the millions of dollars, all for one household.”

The Honorable Susan Carlson, Juvenile Court Justice, Minnesota

Policy makers can help prevent FASD and support affected families by introducing and supporting legislation that provides for:

- FASD research to create an epidemiological basis for surveillance of the disease;

- Mandates or initiatives to encourage the cessation of drinking while pregnant;

- Education about the risks of drinking while pregnant in primary and secondary schools;

- Training for substance abuse counselors and allied health professionals on FASD prevention;

- Clinical research and development of medical strategies to further understand and prevent FASD;

- Screening of newborns and children in order to better identify those with FASD;

- Development of the necessary screening, analysis, and treatment procedures for those with FASD who enter the foster care, juvenile justice, or adult criminal justice system;

- Intervention training for professionals who work in high risk settings such as clinics, addiction centers, psychiatric wards, orphanages, and jails;

- Creation and dissemination of avenues through which individuals with FASD will have access to quality health care;

- Ensuring teacher training and access to special education in and out of school for those with learning disabilities that are associated with FASD; and

- Creation and implementation of vocational and living support services for individuals with FASD, including psychological and physical care, when needed.