

# Alaska State Legislature

## Senator Pete Kelly

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### *Session*

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## Sponsor Statement – SCR 13

*“Urging the governor to establish and support programs designed to eradicate the occurrence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder from the state.”*

Senate Concurrent Resolution 13 calls for a focused, statewide effort to prevent further occurrence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in Alaska. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) has been identified as a driver of numerous social challenges in our state. The tragedy of fetal exposure to alcohol continues to negatively impact Alaska’s families, communities, and government agencies.

Due to its teratogenic effects, Alcohol creates more damage to the brain of a fetus than cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamine. Unfortunately, the brain damage created by alcohol is irreversible. The state of Alaska currently has the highest documented prevalence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in the United States. According to the Alaska Maternal and Child Health Data Book, 112.9 children in 10,000 births in Alaska are born with FASD. The financial cost to the State is tremendous. Best estimates from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services place the cost per child born with FASD in the range of \$860,000 to \$4.2 million dollars.

However, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is completely preventable. This fact highlights the moral and ethical responsibility to take action that all Alaskans share. SCR 13 urges the Governor to establish and support programs designed to eradicate the occurrence of FASD and resolves that the Alaska State Legislature will support programs that will minimize the risk of pre-natal exposure to alcohol. In addition, SCR 13 encourages increasing the State’s capability to conduct rapid FASD screening in order to ensure that those experiencing the challenges of living with FASD receive the care and support they rightly deserve as early as possible. Far too often, alcohol addiction and personal trauma fuel the incidence of fetal exposure to alcohol. For this reason, SCR 13 appeals to the Governor to take actions to expand residential substance abuse treatment services for women who are pregnant and concurrently experiencing alcohol and drug addiction challenges. Thus ensuring mother and child receive the care, protection, and healthy environment they both need in order to thrive.

As Alaskans, we all share in the responsibility of ensuring our future generations are healthy and vibrant. The horrible tragedy of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in Alaska is totally preventable. SCR 13 stands against FASD in Alaska and resolves that the leadership of our State will take actions necessary to safeguard future children from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.