



Colorado Chapter

Written Testimony regarding HB09-1139

January 2009

HB09-1139 which, if approved, establishes a fetal alcohol spectrum disorders commission and encourages alcoholic beverage vendors to post warning signs concerning the risks of consuming alcohol beverages while pregnant. The March of Dimes endorses passage of this bill, HB09-1139.

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. The link between alcohol use during pregnancy and birth defects is well established. All efforts to improve the health of babies are strongly supported by the March of Dimes. Every infant that is born too soon or with birth defects carries devastating personal, social and fiscal burdens.

FACTS:

- In 1973, **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome** was first identified by medical researchers, Dr. David Smith and Kenneth Lyons Jones. Their research and the alcohol use studies of others have been funded by the March of Dimes throughout the past three decades. The medical community continues to learn about the effects of alcohol on developing fetuses.
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is characterized by stunted growth (before and after birth) and central nervous system defects that include hyperactivity, delayed development of gross motor skills, delayed development of fine motor skills, impaired language development, memory problems, learning disabilities, seizures, and is the leading cause of mental retardation.
- One in 1,000 newborns is affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). At least 10 times the number babies born with FAS are impaired by lesser degrees of alcohol-related damage, called Fetal Alcohol Effect.
- Alcohol use also increases the risk of miscarriage and stillbirth.
- There is no safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy.
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is totally preventable.

Warning signs at the point of alcohol sales is a sound step toward improving birth outcomes. The March of Dimes urges your careful deliberation of bill HB09-1139 and we ask you to vote "yes" to give every baby a healthy start.