



For Immediate Release
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Proposed Change to “Public Charge” Policy Hurts Kids, Say Leading California Early Childhood Advocates

First 5s, Created to Help Kids, Call for Policy to Remain Unchanged, Urge Administration and Lawmakers to Work Collaboratively to Create Long-lasting Solutions

SACRAMENTO – Over the weekend, the Trump Administration released a radical new regulatory proposal that would drive up poverty, hunger, unmet health care needs, and worsen a range of other problems facing communities across the United States.

The rule would mark a fundamental change from our nation’s and California’s historic commitment to ensuring immigrants can meet the most basic necessities of life. The Trump Administration’s proposed “public charge” rule would allow immigration officials to deny a green card to an immigrant if the individual is receiving public benefits that are intended to help individuals and families meet basic living requirements. The proposed rule could force immigrant families to forgo access to a wide array of public benefits, including health care, food supports, and housing assistance.

Camille Maben, Executive Director of First 5 California, Moira Kenney, Executive Director of the First 5 Association, and Kim Belshé, Executive Director of First 5 LA, expressed their strong opposition to this proposed change because it endangers the health and well-being of immigrant families. The organizations call on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to restore the policy to its previous state and work collaboratively with lawmakers to create long-lasting solutions that are true to our country’s shared ideas of freedom and respect.

“Sweeping in its effect, this rule expansion would chill enrollment to critical programs that help tax-paying immigrants and their young children access health care, food, and other essential needs – programs which have been proven to improve health, well-being, school success, and economic security,” said Camille Maben. “It would put immigrant families at risk if a family member seeks basic access to critical public services.”

“All families have a right to engage with the public systems that exist to serve their health, education, and caregiving needs without fear of judgement or reprisals,” said Kim Belshé. “With nearly one in four children nationwide having at least one immigrant parent, this proposed rule change will hurt, instead of help, millions of kids. There is a shared responsibility, and a shared benefit from improving the health and well-being of all young children.”

California is home to more than 39.54 million people and is the sixth largest economy in the world, with over 10 million immigrants. Legal immigrants already face fear of enrolling their children in health and nutritional services to which they are already entitled. “First 5s throughout California have received reports that parents are pulling their children out of preschool and

refusing health services their children are legally eligible to receive,” explained Moira Kenney. “This proposed rule, if it were to become final, could have a devastating effect on millions of young children and families across California.”

Once the proposed changes to the “public charge” rule are published in the Federal Register, they will be subject to a 60-day public comment period. The Trump Administration will be required to review and assess the public comments before finalizing the rule. The public will be able to comment on these proposed rules at www.regulations.gov.

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ABOUT FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA

First 5 California was established in 1998 when voters passed Proposition 10, which taxes tobacco products to fund services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. First 5 California programs and resources are designed to educate and support teachers, parents, and caregivers in the critical role they play during a child's first five years – to help California kids receive the best possible start in life and thrive. For more information, please visit www.cfc.ca.gov.

ABOUT FIRST 5 LA

First 5 LA is an independent County agency in Los Angeles that advocates on behalf of parents with young children to help every child, prenatal to age 5, be healthier, safer and better prepared for kindergarten. Knowing 90 percent of a child's brain is developed by age 5, First 5 LA partners with other county agencies, parents and organizations to help elected officials prioritize funding for early childhood education, health care and other programs that young children and their parents need. Please visit www.first5la.org for more information.

ABOUT FIRST 5 ASSOCIATION

First 5 Association is a nonprofit membership organization that advocates for and works with the state's 58 First 5 county commissions to build strong, effective, and sustainable systems serving California's youngest children. www.first5association.org

ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD IN CALIFORNIA

- [90 percent](#) of brain development happens in the first five years of life
- California has nearly 1.5 million babies and toddlers, according to Kids Count Data, 2016
- According to a Choose Children 2018 survey, [87 percent of voters polled](#) said the governor should prioritize early childhood education
- [Fewer than 1 in 3 \[28.5%\]](#) young children in California receive timely developmental screenings
- California ranks [40th in the nation](#) in its efforts to support its youngest children
- In addition to preschool and child care, [high-quality home visiting programs](#), like First 5 LA's Welcome Baby program, can increase children's school readiness, improve child health and development, reduce child abuse and neglect, and enhance parents' abilities to support healthy cognitive, language, social-emotional, and physical development
- Parents with two children may pay nearly half their wages for child care in Los Angeles County, according to a [March 2017 report](#) that explores the resources and gaps in the early care and education system within the county.