

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First 5 Network Responds to State Budget Cut Proposals Impacting California's Youngest Children

First 5 Network confronts the challenges of state budget cuts on child services and advocates for continued support for children's programs

SACRAMENTO, CA (May 14, 2024) - The First 5 Network today expressed disappointment following Governor Newsom's May Revision in response to the state's budget shortfall. Proposed cuts announced on Friday worsen the impact of reductions that have already been made to First 5 programs and services due to declining tobacco tax revenue. Among the programs and services facing cuts are CalWORKS Home Visiting Program, universal transitional kindergarten, Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, child care slots, and no funding for continuous Medi-Cal eligibility for children 0-5. The proposed cuts will affect California children and families who depend on crucial child care, parenting supports, mental health services, and high-quality early learning programs.

First 5s in every county have attempted to stabilize services to young children and families despite rapidly declining tobacco taxes. The Governor's proposed cuts add immense pressures on local First 5s and early childhood providers to administer more services with less funding. "It's unacceptable and untenable for a state as wealthy as California to ask babies, toddlers, and families to help balance budget deficits," said Avo Makdessian, Executive Director of the First 5 Association of California.

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"At the California Children and Families Commission (First 5 CA), our steadfast dedication to meeting the needs of children aged 0-5, their families, and communities remains resolute," said First 5 CA Executive Director, Jackie Wong. "However, this budget proposal falls drastically short of reflecting our values that create the trauma informed, healing centered and culturally responsive systems which our children and families deserve. As we confront the gravity of the revised budget, our focus remains unyielding on realizing our Audacious Goal and North Star: ensuring that every child in California has the opportunity to thrive."

In the face of the staggering budgetary constraints, the First 5 Network remains committed to doing more with less for the communities it serves. Despite the challenges, the network is steadfast in its mission – to ensure the basic rights and essential services of children prenatal-to-five are not eroded by financial shortfalls. The First 5 Network hopes to work with the Legislature and the Administration to overcome these hurdles and champion the cause of California's youngest residents and their families.

"Ensuring the prosperity and well-being of our youngest residents is at the core of First 5 LA's commitment," said First 5 LA President and CEO, Karla Pleitéz Howell. "We encourage the Governor to uphold the innovative policies that lifted up children and families during the pandemic. Protecting child care for our youngest learners and the workforce is paramount to LA County families, while also protecting core programs such as Medi-Cal, CalWORKs and Home Visiting will ensure their basic needs are met. The First 5 Network is ready to work with the Governor to find solutions so that all of California's children have what they need."

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About First 5 Association

The First 5 Association of California (F5AC) elevates the voice of the 58 county First 5s, created by voters in 1998 to ensure our youngest children are healthy, safe and ready to thrive in school and life. The First 5 Network impacts the lives of more than 1 million kids, families and caregivers each year. F5AC advocates for the state's youngest kids, uniting partners and leveraging funding to improve and scale up California's early childhood programming piloted by county First 5s. Learn more at www.first5association.org

About First 5 LA

As one of the state's largest funders of early childhood and an independent public agency, First 5 LA advocates for children and their families, amplifies community voice, and partners for collective impact so that every child in Los Angeles County reaches their full developmental potential throughout the critical years of prenatal to age 5. Learn more at www.first5la.org.

About First 5 California

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.cafc.ca.gov.