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First 5 Association of California Calls on Congress to Reject Alarming Health Care Cuts That Will Hurt Young Children and Families

SACRAMENTO, CA (February 27, 2025)—The First 5 Association of California—which represents First 5 Commissions across the state’s 58 counties—issued the following statement regarding the House Republican budget plan that could eliminate vital health care benefits for an estimated five million California children.

First 5 Association – Attributed to Avo Makdessian, Executive Director, First 5 Association of California:

“About half of all young Californians (ages 0-5) receive their health care through Medi-Cal, making it a lifeline for children and families—especially those in low-income communities and underserved communities who already face barriers to accessing quality care. At a time when California children are already facing unprecedented health care needs due to economic challenges, the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and longstanding disparities, cutting Medicaid funding would spike long-term costs by eliminating early interventions that prevent more serious health issues down the road. California’s 58 First 5 Commissions work within Medi-Cal and other health programs to facilitate families’ access to preventive care, screenings, and support—all services threatened by this budget proposal. We call on Congress and the Trump Administration to reject this proposal and protect Medicaid funding. Investing in young children—especially in preventive care—strengthens families, improves health outcomes, and reduces long-term costs.”

Background Information

Here are some initial estimates of California children ages 0-5 who could lose health care under the GOP budget plan:

| County | # of Children 0-5 in Medi-Cal | Est. # of Children 0-5 | % of Children 0-5 on Medi-Cal |
|---------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Fresno | 62,519 | 83,038 | 75% |
| Kern | 58,690 | 74,849 | 78% |
| Kings | 8,433 | 12,818 | 66% |
| Orange | 82,699 | 188,974 | 44% |
| Riverside | 104,989 | 164,342 | 64% |
| San Bernadino | 105,116 | 160,499 | 65% |
| Tulare | 33,067 | 40,408 | 82% |

About First 5 Association of California

The First 5 Association of California represents the state's 58 county First 5 Commissions. Together, First 5 supports over one million children and families each year, advancing policies and investments that ensure young children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. The Association works to advance state and federal public policies and funding that support California's young children and families. Our policy work is informed by local communities and local First 5 Commissions and is grounded in a whole child / whole family lens. We do this while centering the fact that low-income communities, communities of color, and historically marginalized Californians face disproportionate impacts due to systemic racism, wealth inequality, and environmental hazards.

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