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## **With California State Budget Awaiting The Governor's Approval, First 5 Association Urges Continued Action to Protect Young Children**

SACRAMENTO—The First 5 Association of California, representing First 5 Commissions across the state's 58 counties, issued the following statement regarding the legislative passage of the 2025-26 state budget:

The following can be attributed to Avo Makdessian, Executive Director of First 5 Association of California:

"In a challenging fiscal year, we are encouraged to see lawmakers preserve and expand key mental health investments for California's youngest children, including \$20 million for the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Aware and \$20 million for maternal mental health.

"We remain deeply concerned about the health and wellness of California's youngest children and their families, and the impact of delaying continuous Medi-Cal enrollment for young children and the broader implications of raising premiums for enrollees and freezing enrollment for immigrants without documentation. These proposals come at a time when many immigrant families in California are already living in heightened fear due to intensified federal immigration enforcement. This climate of uncertainty and stress only deepens the barriers to accessing essential health care. When families delay or avoid seeking medical attention, children's health, development, and stability suffer. We urge lawmakers to center equity by removing obstacles to care and to act swiftly in submitting the federal waiver for continuous Medi-Cal coverage for children from birth to age 5.

"This budget also places greater pressure on First 5s and early childhood providers to do more with less. Despite shrinking funding and ongoing federal threats to core programs, First 5s are stepping

up across California to keep families connected to care, early learning, and developmental supports. The health, safety, and potential of every young child is never negotiable.”

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**About First 5 Association of California**

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 county First 5 Commissions and local communities 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.

Learn more at [www.first5association.org](http://www.first5association.org).