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First 5 Association Warns 2025-26 Federal Budget Bills Will Deepen Poverty for California's Youngest Children

SACRAMENTO—Following final congressional passage of the 2025-26 federal budget, the First 5 Association of California, representing First 5 Commissions across the state, warned that the legislation will force more of California's children into poverty, cut off health care for vulnerable families, and permanently exclude immigrant children from federal support.

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

"This federal budget deal offers a temporary boost to the Child Tax Credit, but also locks in deep, permanent harm for children across the nation with the greatest need. The legislation strips Medicaid access from millions of low-income parents and children, undermines food assistance programs, and excludes immigrant families from the Child Tax Credit altogether—even when their children are U.S. citizens.

"The changes to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program mean hundreds of thousands of veterans, foster youth, and people experiencing homelessness cannot access nutritious food.

"The bill also contains a dire provision that lowers the federal Medicaid match for the expansion population. This means 2.3 million Californians will lose health insurance and the State of California will lose \$61 billion in federal funding, devastating hospitals and providers.

"In 2021, the U.S. cut child poverty nearly in half by expanding the Child Tax Credit and ensuring the poorest families could benefit. But instead of restoring that proven strategy, this bill cuts Medicaid and food assistance to fund additional tax breaks for billionaires and large corporations.

"California's First 5s understand how poverty and lack of health care harm early development. If approved by the president, these cuts will combine with recent state reductions, further widening health and achievement gaps and potentially leading to lifelong consequences. First 5 Association will steadfastly fight these cuts and work toward a bipartisan budget that prioritizes all children."

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About the First 5 Association of California

The First 5 Association of California represents the state's First 5 Commissions. Together, First 5s support 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.