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Following State Budget Approval, First 5 Association Calls for Vigilance and Continued Action to Protect California's Youngest Children

SACRAMENTO—The First 5 Association of California, representing First 5 Commissions across California's 58 counties, issued this statement following Governor Gavin Newsom's approval of the 2025–26 state budget:

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

"In a year of difficult choices, we are pleased to see that the Governor and Legislature restored the funding for maternal mental health grants. Yet we remain gravely concerned about the broader consequences of implementing monthly premiums and freezing new Medi-Cal enrollment for undocumented adults and the reduced investment in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Aware. These decisions risk pushing more families into the shadows and further away from needed health care.

"Young children are inevitably affected when their families lack access to health care. Untreated parental health issues—particularly in immigrant households living under the constant threat of federal raids—can disrupt a child's development, safety, and future. We urge state leaders to swiftly submit the federal waiver for continuous Medi-Cal coverage for children from birth to age five, and we call on Congress to protect federal Medicaid funding so California's children and families don't sustain more devastating losses to their health coverage.

"We are also disappointed in the reduced investment in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Aware, which has been instrumental in equipping Medi-Cal providers with the capacity to prevent, identify, and treat the health impacts of early childhood adversity. We urge the restoration of

program funding to ensure it continues to meet the needs of historically marginalized communities.

“This budget continues to challenge First 5 commissions across California’s 58 counties to do more with less. Despite shrinking revenues and federal threats to core programs, First 5s continue to connect families to care, early learning, and developmental supports. The health, safety, and potential of every young child should remain California’s top priority.”

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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.