



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## First 5 Association Welcomes New Officers to its Board of Directors

SACRAMENTO—The First 5 Association of California, representing First 5 commissions across the state that serve more than 1 million children and families each year, has named its new Officers to its Board of Directors. The Association is the membership and advocacy organization for the First 5 Network, which consists of public county commissions in every California county that connect families with young children to essential care, early learning, and supportive services, while coordinating local systems so communities can deliver the best possible start in life for California's youngest children.

"I am truly excited and honored by the privilege and responsibility of leading the Association of County Commissions," **said incoming Association Board President Wendy Sims-Moten, Executive Director of First 5 Santa Barbara.** "Together, as a strong and united network, we will align our vision, efforts, and resources to create the best possible future for the children of California. I hope, over the next two years, to work to elevate the local stories of the changes happening every day in our children's lives resulting from our statewide, coordinated, cross-sector work and advocacy. Our children deserve nothing less than our unwavering commitment and our very best."

"California's early childhood system depends on strong local leadership, ever-growing partnerships, and an institutional understanding of what families need," **said Avo Makdessian, Executive Director of First 5 Association of California.** "Our new board officers bring exactly that expertise. Their experience guiding county commissions, commitment to equity, and deep knowledge of what works on the ground will help us translate policy into meaningful results for children prenatally to age five. I'm grateful for their willingness to lead at such a critical year for the protection of young children and their families."

The Association also extends its appreciation to its outgoing officers and committee chairs for their leadership over the past two years: Kitty Lopez (First 5 San Mateo), Karen Pautz (First 5 Siskiyou), and Alethea Arguilez (First 5 San Diego).

The 2026 officers are:

- **President:** Wendy Sims-Moten, First 5 Santa Barbara
- **Vice President:** Jennifer Kelleher Cloyd, First 5 Santa Clara
- **Secretary-Treasurer:** David Brody, First 5 Santa Cruz
- **Policy & Advocacy Committee Chair:** Theresa Zighera, First 5 San Francisco
- **Immediate Past President:** Fabiola González, First 5 Fresno

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#### **About First 5 Association of California**

The First 5 Association of California represents First 5 commissions across the state. Together, First 5 supports over 1 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.

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