



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First 5 Association Co-Sponsors Bill Focused on Ending Child Poverty

AB 1996 by Assemblymember Mia Bonta would create a California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council

SACRAMENTO, CA — The First 5 Association of California, representing First 5 commissions across the state that serve more than 1.2 million children and families, proudly supports Assembly Bill 1996, legislation by Assemblymember Mia Bonta (D-Oakland) to establish the California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council. The 19-member council will develop and publish a comprehensive plan to reduce statewide child poverty by 50% over a decade. The council will also evaluate legislative and state budget proposals related to child poverty and provide its analysis to the Legislature.

Avo Makdessian, Executive Director of First 5 Association of California, testified yesterday in support of the bill in the Senate Human Services Committee. He spoke specifically in support of an amendment adding a representative from the First 5 Network to the council. The following statement can be attributed to Makdessian.

“Child poverty in California is reversible. After pandemic-era supports ended, child poverty rose from a historic low of 7.5% in 2021 to 18.6% in 2024. State policy has a direct impact on poverty, and AB 1996 creates an important new structure focused on reducing child poverty once again.

“Growing up in poverty in the earliest years of life causes the most lasting harm, shaping brain development, health, and school readiness. Including First 5 on the Council ensures policy is informed by early childhood expertise. First 5 also brings experience in local implementation, or how state policy reaches families on the ground. With First 5 at the table, the California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council will be better positioned to promote and strengthen policies that reach families with young children in every county.”

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About First 5 Association of California

First 5 Association of California represents First 5 commissions across the state. Together, First 5 supports over 1.2 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.