



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2026

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# First 5 Association Responds to Approved 2026-27 State Budget

SACRAMENTO, CA (June 30, 2026) — The First 5 Association of California, representing First 5 commissions across the state that serve more than 1.2 million children and families each year, issued the following statement regarding the 2026–27 state budget signed into law yesterday by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

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

“The final state budget fails to protect infant and early childhood mental health services at a time when families need them most. The [National Survey of Children’s Health](#) found that [57 percent of California parents](#) say it is “difficult to impossible” to obtain mental health care for their child.

“Despite repeated warnings from local First 5s, state leaders failed to provide a one-time \$20 million bridge investment for child preventive mental health care and failed to create a dedicated prevention funding stream for children from birth to age five. The earliest years of a child’s life are the most important period for brain development, with consequences for mental health that carry into adulthood. This decision leaves California’s youngest children exposed to a preventable gap in mental health care.

“We are also concerned that moving Medi-Cal beneficiaries with Unsatisfactory Immigration Status out of managed care and into fee-for-service could disrupt care for immigrant families with young children. We appreciate the inclusion of funding for care coordination and community-based navigators during the transition, but this change could still make care harder for families to navigate. When care is delayed or harder to coordinate, babies and young children can miss the early screenings and supports that build lifelong health and development.”

“We’re glad to see Governor Newsom and lawmakers expand child care by 26,200 spaces above what the governor proposed in May. The First 5 Network joined partners across the state in calling for stronger child care investments, and we are glad that state leaders heard those calls and acted to protect and expand access. However, this budget still falls short of the 44,000 spaces previously committed. California’s child care crisis may be invisible to some, but it remains a daily struggle for families and care providers. Demand in California remains far larger than this investment can meet. We look forward to working with the next administration to

advance a child care and early childhood system that brightens California’s future by supporting children, families, and providers.”

“First 5s are trusted local partners in all 58 California counties, with the community knowledge and infrastructure to deliver prevention services to families most in need. California’s youngest children deserve a sustained commitment to prevention, early intervention, and healthy development, and the First 5 Network remains dedicated to advancing that goal.”

**Background on mental health funding:** In 2004, California voters passed the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), which is funded by a 1 percent tax on incomes over \$1 million. This investment provided counties with resources for both mental health prevention and early intervention programs. In 2024, voters passed the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), which moved mental health prevention funding to a new state-level Population-Based Prevention Fund. Administered by the California Department of Public Health, the Population-Based Prevention Fund is intended to support community-based programs that stop mental health problems before they start.

The First 5 Association of California had asked the Legislature for a one-time \$20 million investment specifically for children up to five years old and for a permanent funding stream within that state fund for that age group.

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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](http://www.first5association.org).