



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First 5 Association's Statement on the Passing of Dolly Parton

SACRAMENTO, CA (August 25, 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 Dolly Parton's passing.

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

"Today, we honor the life and legacy of Dolly Parton, a trailblazer and champion for early childhood literacy. Her passion for the issue was inspired by her father's inability to read or write.

"Through her Imagination Library, Parton helped millions of children from birth to age 5 access age-appropriate books. Across California, First 5s help bring Imagination Library books into children's hands — as local operators of the program, funders, partners and promoters.

"The First 5 Network shares Parton's enduring commitment to early childhood literacy and honors her legacy by carrying this work forward, helping ensure every child in California can access books that teach and inspire a lifelong love of reading."

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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.