

The First 5 Network Statement on the 2022-23 State Budget

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, USA, July 1, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, the First 5 Network thanks Governor Newsom and the Legislature for adopting the 2022-23 state budget that provides critical investments in behavioral and mental health, children's health, early literacy, and reproductive rights.

The First 5 Network is appreciative of the \$10 million investment in the 2022-23 fiscal year and \$20 million ongoing to support continuous Medi-Cal coverage for children ages 0-5.

"This investment will ensure that California's young children don't miss out on critical well-child visits and developmental screenings due to loss of Medi-Cal coverage," said First 5 Association Board President Kitty Lopez. "This budget demonstrates the Legislature and Administration's clear commitment to young children's health and well-being."

The First 5 Network also commends the inclusion of a \$250 million allocation for behavioral health for children ages 0 through 25, and looks forward to working with the Administration and Legislature on expanding access to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.

The final state budget provides a one-year waiver of family fees for child care services, \$100 million for child care infrastructure, and prioritizes family strengthening services by investing \$37.5 million to expand the California Home Visiting Program.

As we look beyond this year, we will need to urgently address the challenges that plague the child care and early learning system, which faces historic inflation, depreciated wages and compensation, and a workforce crisis. As access to services continues to be an issue for working families, it is important to advocate that rich early learning experiences empower young children to thrive.

"With their strong focus on addressing the needs of families now, the governor and lawmakers are to be applauded for a state budget that prioritizes investments in the health and well-being of our youngest children," said Kim Belshé, Executive Director at First 5 LA. "By continuing to increase child care spaces, waive family fees, and hold harmless policies for providers, state leaders are helping to make vital early learning resources more accessible to and affordable for families. We look to state leaders to take action on critical work that remains, particularly providing adequate living wages for child care providers. The budget also makes significant, on-

going investments to expand the California Home Visiting Program, connecting more families, especially those facing a variety of challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, with home visitors who serve as a critical link to family-strengthening supports. There is no better investment we can make than in the stability and success of California families.”

The final state budget also provides \$10 million to the California Department of Public Health to administer a statewide program in partnership with First 5 California to provide multilingual books for families with young children, \$68 million to expand the book distribution through the CA State Librarian and numerous other literacy investments through the CA Department of Education.

“We are proud and grateful for the State’s investment in comprehensive early literacy that builds upon First 5 California’s long-term commitment to brain development by ensuring families have access to culturally appropriate books and rooted in the importance of parents and/or caregivers as a child’s first teacher,” said Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, Executive Director for First 5 California.

“As we continue to focus on a whole-child, whole-family framework, we celebrate the historical cash policy investments to ensure that families have money in their pockets to pay for basic needs. This includes ensuring that no family receiving CalWORKs is living in deep poverty, supporting former foster youth including those who are pregnant and parenting with a \$1000 tax credit and creating an infrastructure that will allow for more families to receive tax credits in a streamlined manner. One of the most notable investments is the establishment of a Baby Bonds through the Hope for Children Act. Building on these investments, we will continue to advocate for California to increase opportunities for parents and caregivers to bond with their children in their early years through a fully accessible and equitable paid leave programs because we acknowledge that cash matters and supports the opportunities for families to create the safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments necessary for healthy development,” said Ms. Wong.

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About First 5 Association

First 5 Association of California is the voice of the 58 First 5 county commissions, which were created by voters in 1998 to ensure our young children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. Together, First 5 touches the lives of more than one million kids, families, and caregivers each year, and strengthens our state by giving kids the best start in life. Learn more at www.first5association.org.

About First 5 California

First 5 California was established in 1998 when voters passed Proposition 10, which taxes tobacco products to fund services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. First 5 California programs and resources are designed to educate and support teachers, parents, and caregivers in the critical role they play during a child’s first five years—to help California kids receive the best

possible start in life and thrive. For more information, please visit www.ccfc.ca.gov.

About First 5 LA

As the state's largest funder of early childhood, First 5 LA works to strengthen systems, parents and communities so that children are ready to succeed in school and life. An independent public agency, First 5 LA's goal is to support the safe and healthy development of young children so that by 2028, all children in L.A. County will enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life.

Learn more at www.first5la.org.

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