



March 14, 2024

Katie Albright, J.D., Chair
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1115 Atlantic Avenue,
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RE: STATE PARTNERSHIP AND INVESTMENT TO AVOID FURTHER LOCAL CUTS TO CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Dear Katie and Jackie:

We are writing to follow up on the presentation that was made at the January 25, 2024, First 5 California Commission meeting. At that meeting, First 5 Executive Directors Fabiola González (Fresno), Heidi Mendenhall (Tehama), Jennifer Cloyd (Santa Clara), and Courtney Armstrong (First 5 Association) provided an overview of the urgent financial challenges facing local First 5 commissions and our request for the First 5 California Commission to partner with us to address them.

Currently, the majority of local First 5 commissions have or are planning to cut direct services for children and families. Our most recent survey found that 42 percent of local First 5s have already made cuts in community investments this year (FY23-24) and 60 percent of local First 5s plan on community investment cuts in FY24-25. Local First 5s that responded to our survey represent nearly 90 percent of the state’s children birth to age 5. Given this urgent need, we are seeking a detailed response as to how First 5 California can support local First 5 commissions in the following ways:

1. Allocate First 5 California funding to local First 5s to stop cuts in direct services for children and their families. We request this allocation be discussed as soon as possible.
2. Provide next steps related to Commissioner Mendoza Jimenez’s suggestion at the January 25 Commission meeting to have the Commission’s Fiscal Committee discuss this matter before the next scheduled Commission meeting in May.
3. Advocate to the State Administration and Legislature for other state funding to prevent immediate cuts to children and families served by local First 5s. As we shared, last week Assemblymember Pellerin made a formal request to Senate and Assembly budget chairs to support a one-time state budget allocation of \$100 million to ensure that local First 5 programs and services stay intact.
4. Collaborate with local First 5s and the First 5 Association on identifying strategies and a timeline for long-term sustainability of the First 5 Network, including potentially partnering on the Bright Beginnings Act (AB 2982).

Failure to secure a short-term, stop-gap investment this year will result in the elimination of even more services and programs currently supporting the healthy development of thousands of California’s youngest residents, the majority of them children of color growing up in low-income households.

We are eager to partner with you on how we face this challenge for our First 5 Network *together*. California families with young children need our joint leadership. Thank you in advance for responding to our requests above.

Sincerely,

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Fabiola González
President, First 5 Association of California
Executive Director, First 5 Fresno County

Signer ID: CVNLTCZK10...
Avo Makdessian
Executive Director, First 5 Association of California

