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March 7, 2024

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
 Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
 1020 O Street, Suite 8230
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Weiner
 Chair, Senate Budget Committee
 1020 O Street, Suite 502
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Corey Jackson
 Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 2
 1020 N Street, Suite 6120
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar
 Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 3
 1020 N Street, Suite 6720
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Maintaining Critical Services for California's Youngest Children

Dear Chairs Gabriel, Jackson, Weiner, and Menjivar:

I write to respectfully request your support for a state budget allocation of \$100 million to ensure that local programs serving California's babies, toddlers, and preschoolers stay intact. This one-time funding request would be allocated to First 5 programs throughout the state and focus on the highest priority areas including:

- Family strengthening programs such as family resource centers, fatherhood programs and home visiting;
- Infant and early childhood mental health services for young children and their caregivers, and workforce training; and
- Child care and early learning supports such as provider coaching, mentoring, and stipends.

For 25 years, local First 5 programs in every county have supported the healthy development and school readiness of millions of California children. Already declining tobacco tax revenues that fund First 5 programs have been dramatically slashed since Proposition 31 (the flavored tobacco ban) was implemented last year. Tobacco tax revenue projections estimate **First 5s will need to cut \$133M** in early childhood community investments over the next two fiscal years and **\$426.8M** in the next five fiscal years. The need is urgent— more than 42% of First 5s have already made program cuts this year and 60% are planning on program cuts in 2024-25.

Without a short term, stop-gap investment from the state, programs serving tens of thousands of low-income children and children of color will end. California's babies, toddlers, and preschoolers should not bear the impact of the flavored tobacco ban in the form of fewer services and opportunities for healthy development.

Local First 5s make up a statewide, 58-county network of early childhood service providers, case managers, grant makers, program coordinators, trusted messengers, researchers, advocates, and effective public stewards of state and local funding. Together this network impacts the lives of more than 1 million kids, families and caregivers each year.

In addition to community program cuts, operational reduction in this network mean First 5s cannot coordinate local early childhood services like home visiting or serve as contract managers for CalAIM (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal) community partners.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please contact my Legislative Director, Charmaine Mills, at Charmaine.Mills@asm.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



GAIL PELLERIN
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 28TH DISTRICT