

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 10:59:00 PM

03/19/2025

Other - If Other, provide details in narrative below.

The SDQPI program has elevated and strengthened my program overall. Through the program my staff and I have the access and ability to further our knowledge and truly promote quality care.

There are several ways to attend various online and in person trainings and information. Having access to a coach and mentor is priceless.

Bianca Perez



From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 9:36:10 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the professional service provided by San Diego County Office of Education. It has been a profound experience to have coaches who have help me grow professionally in my career. With their guidance and support, I have learned the true meaning of how to be an effective leader. I have a deeper understanding of the factors that provides teachers with teaching practices and classroom management strategies to build inclusive communities and build relationships. San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative has made a tremendous impact on me.

Brenda Patty

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:29:55 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Funding Reductions in FY 2025-2030

As a Dentist and Dental Director of Indian Health Council, Inc., a San Diego-based health center, I have witnessed the transformative impact of the Oral Health Initiative (OHI) in improving the oral and overall health of Native American children aged 0-5. The saying “knowledge is power” rings true in the dental chair, where OHI empowers parents and children through education on oral hygiene and diet. These opportunities, made possible by OHI funding, have led to significant improvements in our patients' oral health, as evident during follow-up visits.

OHI also plays a crucial role as the payer of last resort, ensuring children who might otherwise lack access to care receive essential services. Its outreach and education efforts, including informing families about Medi-Cal Dental benefits, reduce disparities and foster healthier habits. Witnessing these positive transformations reaffirms the importance of this initiative.

At Indian Health Council, Inc., we see how OHI builds healthier futures for Native American families. I fully support this vital program and its commitment to promoting equity in healthcare.

Chance Bodini

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:30:14 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Funding Discussion presentation

Hello, my name is Courtney Baltiyskyy. I am a mother of two young kids in Chula Vista and an advocate for children, youth, and their families. Within this commitment I work with the YMCA and help lead the Children First Collective, a group of organizations and leaders tackling the challenges of access to affordable, quality child care. One of our commitments is mental and behavior health for kids and their caregivers. First 5 plays an instrumental role in this and is now in grave jeopardy. We thank the First 5 San Diego Commission for their steadfast work to consider the budget with an equity-based approach, mitigating the risk of loosing services for those who need it the most. With a spirit of collaboration and impact evidence, San Diego has an opportunity to innovate and share the funding responsibility across new government entities, agencies, and philanthropy.

First 5 San Diego programs contribute to and absolutely enhance sustainability in the areas of child and family well-being, the environment, and the economy. I want to draw attention to the profound support offered to parents and caregivers for behavioral screenings, developmental delay screenings, and treatment for over 27,000 0-5 year olds through the Healthy Development Services program. First 5 San Diego and partners have done this important work with the resources available. Testimonials from families in First 5's reports truly showcase the transformative change experienced with this support. First 5 San Diego data is transparent and accessible. However, many families continue to experience long waiting lists, delays in assessment, and a lack of direct services. This is concerning, and the worry in lack of resources only compounds when considering the projected and significant decrease of funding from the state and local district funding. When considering mental health equity and well-being in San Diego, we have to choose to care for a true continuum – from young children to the adults who care for them. I ask you to do all you can to guarantee funding for HDS in your final decisions.

Courtney Baltiyskyy

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 11:53:24 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I support continued funding for all First 5 programs. Many families in San Diego have used and relied on these services as a source of support, information, and intervention from their children. As a speech therapist at Rady Children's Hospital, I greatly appreciate the work at First 5 does in meeting the communication and behavior needs of children with mild to moderate impairments. These children would face very long waitlists to access care at our clinics. Insurance can also be a barrier for them.

I appreciate your consideration of keeping all Forst 5 programs fully funded.

Catherine Dabasinkas

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 11:37:17 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I would just like to express how helpful the First 5/C3 program has been for myself and my son. This program was made available for us because my son had spent time in the NICU and I was referred to this program. The staff at first 5 are so helpful and so knowledgeable and really helped me as a first time mom. The program offers great resources and support for parents. Having First 5 as a resource has been so helpful in navigating toddlerhood! The in person classes they offered for my son were great. He thrived there and the staff really took the time to observe him and make recommendations for things to work on with him at home, based on his temperament . I was given tools to be better parent and it has helped me so much. I also watched other kids in the class progress and I know that other parents felt supported by the staff. I think this is such a great program and resource and any parent would be lucky to have to work with this team. Thank you!

Olivia Lavallee

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:14:32 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

A comment from a family who wished to stay anonymous:

“I am so grateful for the first five San Diego staff. As a single mom of two kids with a limited support system, I have appreciated the kindness and wisdom of the staff members at Rady’s C3. They have provided me and my children with information, insight, and practical strategies to assist my children in their continued development. These services are invaluable to families and are often not covered by insurance. I hope to continue to utilize their services until both of my children complete kindergarten.”

Holly Arnold

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 1:30:49 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Funding Reductions FY 2025-2030

I am a Dental Director of a San Diego based health center, and The First 5 San Diego Oral Health Program is and had been a cornerstone of early childhood wellness in the region. By providing dental screenings, exams, and necessary treatments to children 0-5, it ensures a healthier start for the community's youngest members. The program's dedication to care coordination for high-risk children and its commitment to parent education significantly improve access to care and promote preventive habits. Ultimately, this program fosters a culture of oral health, benefiting children and families for years to come.

ibrahim sawaya

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 1:53:27 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

March 25 Agenda item 2 (discussion of funding reductions)

HDS has been the first line of referral for hundreds of physicians caring for thousands of children with mild to moderate delays. Any change (although necessary) will disrupt hard wired workflows that ensure a rapid response for children. HDS also gets referrals and supports children with more severe delays, taking the supportive role of ensuring parents are ready to act upon the referrals for intensive intervention their child needs. With the new dyadic care benefit, some of these services (such as behavior/mental health support) are fundable. However, staffing will need to change and will become more expensive. Patient access representatives are more expensive than admin's who schedule appointments and triage families without having or needing knowledge of funding streams, authorization processes and registration in the EHR. Likewise the process to bill can cost more than the FFS reimbursement by Medi-Cal. For example, a speech therapy visit may be reimbursed at 44.00/visit and it may cost 35.00 to drop the bill. The cost of that speech therapist (SLP) is about 58.00+/hr with benefits and no other overhead costs added (test protocols, scoring programs, time in report writing, etc.). Similarly, a Dyadic Behavioral Health (DBH) visit is provided by a licensed mental health therapist (or a supervised associate therapist) which costs the same or upwards from the cost of an SLP. The DBH visit reimburses at 116.00, and other services such as psychoeducational work with parent or coordination of referrals each pay a FFS rate of 20.00/15 min. These codes are available only for Medi-Cal insured children. Other children, such as those in HMOs (e.g., Sharp Rees Stealy), most likely will not be authorized, and yet time translates to dollars spent in the effort that goes into this denial that results in no service, and no funding.

It makes sense to maximize billing and payment opportunities. Revenues are declining and something must change. However a careful fiscal analysis is needed to evaluate the shift in costs to include a different level of support, use of the EHR for registration, billing and reporting, and to accommodate licensed and licensable, billable staff with appropriate supervision. Many bilingual, bicultural child development specialists need to be laid off, while bilingual, bicultural licensed staff are difficult to find and recruit. The risk is that the funding cuts will result in losing a team's diversity, and will increase costs, although certainly, with regard to behavior services, this change must be explored to take advantage of dyadic care services now being reimbursed by the State. Might you consider starting with Behavior Services. Based upon experience with HealthySteps, I would expect this transition to billable services will take a year as programs transition to systems and a workforce that fits the new model. Is there the possibility of a funding commitment, with a hard timeline, to bridge the gap while the more sustainable funding streams are addressed?

As an aside, how do we ensure the child development specialists we lose transition to roles that increase child care slots (and will compensation be comparable?), so that we don't lose this talent?

Kristin Gist

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:27:52 PM

03/20/2025

Other - If Other, provide details in narrative below.

For the March 25th meeting

HDS has made a large positive impact on the lives of the families I serve in the North San Diego area. It's truly incomprehensible to imagine a decrease in their services being considered. Please allow these vital services continue for our community.

Kelly Lewis, Public Health Nurse

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 7:08:16 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Greetings,

I want to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative. This incredible program has allowed me and the school I work at to continue growing in many different ways. I consider myself a person who likes to learn and improve things in the various areas of my life. With SDQPI, this has been possible since their primary goal is to support schools in improving. We feel the support as a school and different tools for this to happen. We have been very fortunate to have an excellent coach, Karen Matsuda; with her knowledge and coaching, we have learned and implemented great things in our program. With Kare, every coaching session is a win.

We are also grateful for all the different materials and books they provide us to implement them in our everyday activities with the students. The various workshops they offer and facilitate are a significant opportunity to keep ourselves updated in education.

Besides the support we have received as a school, I can see the great benefit for other centers. There is a significant need for early education to have an excellent foundation for the care providers/teachers who are every day with children. I really believe that children are the future, and if we have well-prepared teachers, we will have great results in education and, most of all, a better community to live in.

I hope for this program to continue. Thank you.

Karla Magallon

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:50:44 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting.

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing this with a heavy heart. I am an RN with a practice that serves some of the most vulnerable in our community. Over the last 12 years, I have relied upon First 5 for their comprehensive support for children and their families. They have never failed to exhaust all resources to provide life-changing services. Not only do I hear gratitude and relief from parents trying to meet their children's needs, but I see the remarkable progress being made by the children. As parents, we all want our children to thrive, but beyond that, as citizens we have an obligation to simply do the right thing!

Children are our future. Any reduction in funding for this program is a conscious decision to jeopardize not only these children and their families, but also the foundation of our future. I implore you to consider the value of the services provided by First 5 and the significant return on investment.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter, Kathy Snyder, BSN, RN, PHN.

Kathleen Snyder

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:41:52 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

HDS has been an essential part of supporting families. Many clients who are of lower socioeconomic status are dependent on the services that HSD provides. It is crucial that HDS remains intact with their current funding to help them serve the underserved communities and provide better outcomes for the children in need and ultimately, the families as a whole.

Letisha Kingsbury

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:38:18 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

For continue providing SDQPI services to the teachers in all the schools.

The San Diego County Office of Education has been doing an excellent work by training new and olds teachers during their journey as teachers. The SDQPI provides update trainings based on Fundamental age-appropriate education, couching, mentoring to teaching staff and supervisors, support with education and permits fees and more. Remove the funding for this program is a big mistake.

Mariana Castro-Casas

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:32:45 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

As a public health nurse with COSD, I am eager to voice my support for HDS. HDS services are invaluable to families throughout San Diego County. HDS services are essential to ensuring every child has the opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive. HDS provides critical early intervention services for developmental delays to support community members at risk of poor outcomes. Cutting funding for HDS will decrease resources available to countless children, leaving them without services to reach full potential, disproportionately affecting those from underserved communities. I feel that we as a community should all advocate for and have a moral obligation to invest in children's health and development. Sincerely, Mischa Denton

Mischa Denton

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:18:50 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

This program helped to create a safe space for me and my family, especially for me. We lost our insurance and unfortunately, I was unable to get the help that I needed for my mental state as well as physical. First five helped me during this time that seemed very dark. They helped provide resources, they stayed on top of my care when I was struggling to manage my life as a new parent, they reached out consistently to see if I needed anything or if there was any resource available to us and without them I don't think I'd be in the place where I am today. My family has benefited from the help we received and I was able to have a better relationship with my daughter and she is surpassing milestones thanks to the help we received and the care from our team. Thank you to everyone at the office who helped my family thrive.

Michelle Espinoza

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 8:32:00 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff

NONE

I am working for Neighborhood House Association, my coach from SDQPI is Gabriela Luna, I have the opportunity to work with her since I became, I site Supervisor, her knowledge, kindest and passion for early learners make a big difference her coaching style make me understand how to improve and achieve my site goals. SDQPI keep us informed with the available stipends available for all my staff. As an agency we are fortunate to count with them to provide great services for our families, students and staff.

Martha Kaeg

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 9:20:56 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

special meeting on March 25th

I'm very grateful for the great couch instructions and support that I received From Ms. Gabriela Luna Couch for SDQPI. Thanks to her dedication and support, I learned how to become a better supervisor by demonstrating my teachers and parents how to support the dependent on learning, relationships, physical ability, cognitive, behavioral and social emotional learning of the children. For New Life Head Start are goal was to support children in the social emotional area, because are children behavior was very challenging in the last 5 years. Ms. Gabriela provided resources and model how to re-direct children to other activities in a supportive and positive way, by implementing all of the resources and support from MS. Gabriela, New Life children behavior and social emotional learning improved to 95%, children are able to talk about their feelings, take turns sharing, and what most important they are able to concentrate and listen to teacher's directions. In summary I believe that the SDQPI program is essential for the support of the children overall development and family, parenting education. Thanks to the SDQPI couching and services New Life is a program of excellence with a site tier rating of 5 starts.

Maria Ledezma

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:31:43 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

I am beyond appreciative of the assistance and support my daughter and myself are receiving from Healthy Services. As a single mother who is learning how to navigate life with a toddler who learns differently than her peers - I am thankful that I am able to receive the support and education to further assist her. I do not know where I would have needed to start looking for help had it not been for them, to defund them would be a great loss for the entire community.

Stephanie Johnson

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:31:42 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

I am beyond appreciative of the assistance and support my daughter and myself are receiving from Healthy Services. As a single mother who is learning how to navigate life with a toddler who learns differently than her peers - I am thankful that I am able to receive the support and education to further assist her. I do not know where I would have needed to start looking for help had it not been for them, to defund them would be a great loss for the entire community.

Stephanie Johnson

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:22:26 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

This comment is in regards to the funding cuts to the Healthy Development Services program.

I am writing to you both as a concerned early childhood educator and a concerned parent. I am a director of a preschool in Carlsbad and I hold a MA degree in early childhood education. I am also a mom of four children under age five, one of which has personally benefited from this program.

At our preschool, we have had the pleasure of hosting parenting classes at our site thanks to this program. When we have a child who is struggling, this program is our first line for offering support and education for the families we serve. This program is unique in that it really is a full family support program, not just services for the child. So many families have concerns about behavior, routine, discipline, and other parenting challenges but don't have a lot of places to turn for answers. Pediatrician appointments are quick and rarely go into detail about these concerns. Finding answers online is a nightmare - everybody has 10 different answers to every problem and it is very difficult to parse out what is evidence based and how to implement solutions for their unique family. The nature of this program has also been beneficial because parents who are resistant to acknowledging that their child needs support have been more receptive to this type of program as opposed to a higher level such as the school district.

As someone who has been in the education field for over ten years, I can honestly say we need programs like this more than ever before. Since the covid-19 pandemic we have seen an increase in challenging behaviors and emotional regulation difficulties, delays in development, toilet training challenges, and parental stress. What we have not seen is an increase in IFSP/IEPs, which shows that while the challenges parents are facing are mounting, the support for these families has not followed the same trend. This is one of the few programs that meets this need and I worry about how this will affect us personally and as a society.

My own son is one of the many children benefiting from this program. My child struggles with emotional regulation and sensory processing, but he does not have a diagnosis that would warrant an IEP. After going through the support courses offered by HDS, we were referring to play therapy right after my son turned 3. I was so excited that my son would be able to receive this support because there isn't a whole lot out there for the kids who need some extra support but don't need enough to warrant district services. So often parents will try to get their children support through the school district but they don't qualify immediately and that critical window of the first five years closes before they are even able to secure a diagnosis. You can imagine my frustration and heartbreak when we found out, after only three sessions, that funding was being cut and we wouldn't be receiving the full 26 sessions. There is a clear and powerful message in this decision: kids like my son, the ones not "bad off" enough for IEPs, don't

matter. We are supposed to stand by, watch our children struggle, and wait until they are finally behind enough to warrant higher levels of intervention as opposed to giving them much needed support to possibly prevent reaching that level. By the time they reach this level they are behind academically and emotionally and often carry the stigma that comes with being the more challenging child. This decision goes against the plethora of research that supports the first five years being the best time to offer support to children and puts children in a position to be constantly playing catch up.

This decision will cause the achievement gap between socioeconomic groups to widen. Like many families, we are not in a position to pay for private services. More often than not, insurance requires a diagnosis to cover any services and still fights tooth and nail to provide as little support as they can get away with. With economic pressures increasing and no sign of relief coming anytime soon, now is not the time to turn our backs on these families.

I strongly urge you to consider the long-term consequences of children and families losing access to this support. As a society, we all suffer when individuals do not learn healthy emotional regulation or have the support they need to be secure, productive members of society.

I appreciate your time and consideration regarding this matter.

Sami Neblett

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 5:38:38 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

Dear members of the First 5 San Diego Commission,

As a nurse working with families with children ages 0-3 years old in San Diego, I have been so grateful for the services provided by Healthy Development Services (HDS). HDS not only provides early detection and intervention services, but they have been able to connect and engage with families that have barriers to care such as a lack of transportation, language barriers, low income, or uninsured. The classes they offer educate families on developmental and behavioral expectations and ways to support their child's development and promote secure attachment. HDS is a vital resource in our community. Please consider maintaining current level funding for HDS.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Nilsen, RN, PHN

Stephanie Nilsen

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:27:26 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I am writing to support continued funding directly to the First 5 Commission of San Diego. I recently moved to San Diego from Boston, Massachusetts, and have noticed the differences in the quality of early intervention services almost immediately. The early intervention and parent training provided by First 5 is a gold standard of care which I had only ever read about in textbooks and scientific articles before becoming a resident of San Diego. These services are an essential public health effort to support the long-term success of at-risk and disabled youth across their lifespan. For example, I will be discharging a 2 year old from individual speech/language treatment at the end of this month who received services through First 5 and would not have been ready for discharge without it. There is a clear and strong research basis for these interventions and their continued implementation is vital to the continued success of child and disability services throughout all of San Diego. When I am able to successfully discharge a child from therapy at two years old, I am then able to see even more children under 3 who are in need of evidence based early invention treatment. This reduces the caseload in early intervention services as well as properly streamlining transition to school-based services to prevent undue burden on the public school system. Again, this is simply not possible without First 5 funded programs.

Savannah Strange

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:32 PM

To: Hays, Karen <Karen.Hays@sdcounty.ca.gov>; Javier, Lenette <Lenette.Javier@sdcounty.ca.gov>

Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

meeting date 3/25/25

Please review my submission below, thank you.

Colleen OConnor

<https://first5sandiego.org/index.php?gf-download=2025%2F03%2FMeeting-on3.25.25.pdf&form-id=5&field-id=14&hash=d03ecf110e352df031ed48093ad7bdc41a281e804cf6d8d730bb76347d1e3af4>

To Whom It May Concern,

I am deeply concerned to hear that the Healthy Development Services program is considering cutting funding for essential resources that many families and children across San Diego County rely on. Reducing these services would be a tremendous disservice to our community. With lasting effects that will take a toll on the well-being of our community.

Allow me to introduce myself: I am a mother of five children, all of whom were born and raised in North County. I chose this area to raise my family because of the strong sense of community. Two of my children are biological, and three are adopted. My youngest, who was born prematurely, required swallowing therapy through county services. Without the financial support provided by these programs, I would not have been able to afford the care my child needed. As a mother, my only job is to provide safety and security for my children, and knowing I had resources and therapists advocating for us made all the difference. Thanks to those services, my daughter is now 21 years old, attending college, and leading a relatively typical life.

I am also a preschool director with 40 years of experience in early education. I work at a local nonprofit school and am actively involved in serving and connecting with our community every day. Through my work, I witness firsthand the positive impact of services like those offered by Healthy Development. For example, First 5 has come to our school to conduct hearing and vision screenings. Over the years, I have referred countless parents to First 5 for support and resources. And to be very honest with you I have a family in that I'm going to refer to First 5 next week when they are home from vacation. The 2-year-old boy has a very limited vocabulary (about 10 words such as mama) and frequently gets upset when his classmates don't understand him. This is so hard to watch because he wants to communicate with his friends but is unable to right now. The best part about this situation is once this child receives speech therapy his life will become easier and it's a matter of a couple of years when we see him talking and effectively communicating with those around him, so he too can live a relatively typical life.

The resources provided by Healthy Development Services are vital to the well-being of our community. Cutting them would be a great loss to the children and families who depend on these programs to thrive. I am asking you to please reconsider making cuts to his program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Colleen O'Connor, Co-Director of Pilgrims Children's Center



From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 1:57:58 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

3/25/25- SDCOE SDQPI

We have found SDQPI to be very valuable in our district. Through one-on-one coaching and numerous training opportunities for our ECE employees, we are able to continue running successful and high-quality preschool programs that our children and community deserve.

Soung Wegenka

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 12:28:17 PM

03/20/2025

Other - If Other, provide details in narrative below.

Hello,

My name is Erica, and I am a site leader, my school also participates in SDQPI program. The program is fundamental in providing equitable access to quality education and resources for children and their families. Once a month, my coach comes on site to mentor me on providing quality education to toddlers and preschoolers. As well as trainings on how to better equip my staff with the skills and knowledge to provide equitable quality childcare to disadvantaged preschoolers and toddlers. Additionally, the program provides quality incentives to help retain workforce and provide supplies to students to enhance their learning. To better prepare them for their future.

Please continue to fund this great program. They provide free mentoring services and supplies to already vulnerable industry (childcare). Child as the lowest paid rates for employment and highest rate of burn out. SDQPI truly helps reduces burnout and fatigue in teachers by offering free trainings all year long (professional development).

Erica Serrano

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 10:01:01 AM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

3/25/25 SDQPI contract continuation

Our agency has participated in the San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative (previously known as Preschool for All) since 2011, and we have continued our participation with SDQPI to this date. While the program funding has changed over the years, SDQPI has continued to develop ways to support high quality, sustainability and staff retention within our programs. They created a model of sustainability from the start, empowering us through coaching and training opportunities. Several of our staff have received trainer of trainers certifications through our participation, and the Embedded Coaching Contract allowed us to develop a robust, internal coaching system that we have built out even further since the contract ended. The coaching, training and funding allowed our agency to fully implement the tools to further elevate our educational and child assessment services. SDQPI helped us to build out our services to families, including developmental screening, referral support for children with identified special needs and dual language learners. The dedication to continued staff stipend funding has been an effective tool in staff retention, while supporting their continued professional growth. Lastly, our assigned Program Specialists have been invaluable to my growth as an Early Childhood Education professional. They supported me immensely in obtaining my Program Director permit, and guided me every step of the way while I learned all the new acronyms used in this field; I consider them more than just contract partners, I consider them mentors who have helped shape the Administrator I am today.

Nicole Steele

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 8:18:38 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Item C

To the esteemed members of the First 5 Commission:

I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of robust early intervention services through HDS as well as the invaluable role they play in partnership with school districts. Early intervention is not merely a program; it is a fundamental investment in the future of children, families, and community.

The developmental years are a period of rapid growth and neural plasticity. Early identification and intervention during this crucial window can significantly alter a child's trajectory, preventing the escalation of challenges into more complex and costly needs later in life. By addressing developmental delays, learning disabilities, and behavioral concerns early on, they empower children to reach their full potential, fostering academic success, social-emotional well-being, and overall health.

Early intervention services are not limited to addressing individual needs. A truly effective approach supports the "whole child" and the "whole family." By providing comprehensive services, including educational support, therapeutic interventions, and family resources, they create a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes holistic development. This approach strengthens families, equips them with essential tools, and fosters resilience, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more stable community.

Furthermore, HDS plays a crucial role in preventing the need for more intensive and costly services in later years. By addressing challenges early, they reduce the likelihood of academic failure, behavioral difficulties, and reliance on specialized services throughout a child's educational journey and beyond. This proactive approach is not only ethically sound but also fiscally responsible. Investing in early intervention is an investment in a brighter and healthier future for everyone. It is a commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. By prioritizing early intervention through HDS and fostering strong community partnerships, they can create a more equitable and supportive environment for all our children and families. Any reduction in funding will be detrimental to the futures of the children they serve and to educational outcomes in the future.

Amanda Carlson

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:48:31 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

HDS is a wonderful program that assists with childhood development. With less funding, many families will be affected. Development is essential when children grow up as it affects them holistically--gross development, fine development, communication, and problem solving, and social strengths. With what physicians can do in a span of an hour in a yearly basis. HDS can do weekly or even more depending on the need or acuity. HDS assists in child development even before they go into pre-school to make sure they aren't behind developmentally. HDS improves confidence for not only the child, but also for families. A wealth of knowledge is given at the home through HDS and the work they do. Reduction in funding would be a disservice for all the assistance and support they do for the community.

Arielle Lamuna

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 10:18:43 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

Dear San Diego Commission,

I am a Public Health Nurse from the North Inland Region, and I make use of this resource for our at-risk families and their children.

HDS has mastered the process of efficiently and effectively outreach, identify, address, and obtain results through supporting children's development and parental skills over so many years of serving the community. HDS has supported several of our programs consisted of families at risk, teens, first time mothers, babies with mild to moderate delays, and struggling parents in need of learning basic skills to support their children's healthy growth, increase self-efficacy, independence, and improve families' health outcomes.

It is an established and proven model that includes and opens access to hard-to-find interdisciplinary experts that can efficiently address important issues at home and on time before becoming a bigger threat to each child, parent, family, and the community. Everyone I have referred to this resource has reported success at alleviating and addressing important concerns, improving skills, improving activities of daily living, and overall health outcomes for their entire family. The HDS program has also been a strong liaison for families at risk needing further additional resources.

Diana Becerra

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 1:59:06 PM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Thank you for all you do for the children of our community and our state.

I am the medical director of the UC Health Milk Bank. We have collaborated in the past with First 5 San Diego and it has been such a valuable relationship. The connections made, the public education messaging, and opportunities to work together have been priceless.

Alethea Arguilez has been a valuable partner and advocate for our work. I would like to recognize and thank her for her tireless work on our behalf.

I would love to see more in the public education realm regarding the importance of human milk, both mothers' own milk and donor milk, most especially in the NICU setting for the benefits it affords for the most fragile infants we care for. Calling out families to encourage them to express milk for these babies, to accept donor milk if offered, and to donate milk if they have extra would be a valuable message for our region and our state.

One baby dies every day in the US of Necrotizing Enterocolitis. California has 151 NICUs, and cares for 12% of the newborns in our country. Too many of these babies did not receive the optimal diet. We can do better and we would love to work with First 5 to move the needle on this message.

Thank you,

Lisa Stellwagen MD FAAP

Medical Director, University of California Health Milk Bank

Lisa Stellwagen

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Watson, Hunter](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:30:06 PM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th Meeting

As a Speech Language Pathologist currently working at HDS, I believe it's crucial to share my experiences across various settings and highlight the importance of the Healthy Development Services (HDS) program. One of the most frustrating aspects of my career has been seeing children who are in desperate need of speech and language support, yet are unable to access care for various reasons. These barriers may include lack of insurance, insurance denial for evaluation or treatment, prohibitively high co-pays, or the child's delays not being significant enough to qualify through their school district, among others. HDS steps in to support these children and families, ensuring they receive the services they need when they otherwise would not receive them. Early intervention is vital for a child's success, not only in the short term but for their lifelong development.

I began my journey at HDS during grad school and spent the next six years working in private practice, always with the goal of returning to HDS. Why? Because I realized then, and continue to see now, how unique and important this program is, offering services to families at no-cost.

Given the critical role HDS plays in supporting children and families who would otherwise go without necessary care, I urge decision-makers to consider the significant impact of this program when making funding decisions. Investing in early intervention through HDS is an investment in the long-term success and well-being of these children and, ultimately, our community

Heidi Leininger

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 3:48 PM
To: Watson, Hunter <Hunter.Watson@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

March 25 meeting

Through First 5 I've been able to get the mental health help I needed without having to worry about the out of pocket expenses. I was still dealing with a mountain of anxiety and depression on top of lasting postpartum depression. Therapy with Caroline has helped me to give myself grace and by providing an outlet for me, I am able to be a better person for my family. Therapy has also helped me cope and adjust with the multiple therapies my son is currently undergoing with his being high risk for autism.

With the help of First 5, I have less bad days and am able to enjoy my family more.

Melody Bucayan

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Watson, Hunter](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 3:48:05 PM

03/25/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

March 25, 2025 Item 2

Dear First 5 San Diego Commission,

I am writing in support of continued funding for the SDQPI Learn Well Initiative. The YMCA of San Diego County serves 265 licensed Family Childcare Home and 5 Family Friend and Neighbor providers with 1:1 coaching through this program with a budget of \$1.147 million in FY 25.

The care and early learning these providers give to our youngest children is absolutely critical to their health, wellbeing, and development and to the stability of their families and our economy. Yet, they are some of the most marginalized professionals in our community. Median hourly earnings for ECE professionals in California was as low as \$16.18 in 2023, and Family Child Care Home and Family Friend and Neighbor providers are the lowest paid in the field. Learn Well has given the YMCA an opportunity to support and uplift providers in spite of the challenging circumstances they often face.

In alignment with the County's vision expressed in the Childcare Blueprint that "the child care workforce is well-trained, supported, valued as a profession, and paid competitive wages," our coaches help providers stay on the path of learning and improvement, while providing a listening ear, a safe reflective space, and a cheerleader when times are tough. As we enter a period of deepening fiscal uncertainty, this type of personal support and connection is even more critical to sustaining provider wellbeing so that providers are ready to create the positive teacher-child interactions that drive results for kids.

We are thankful to the First 5 San Diego Commission for investing in this work over many years, and we are very proud to serve so many of the participating providers. As the local state-funded Resource and Referral Agency, we are committed to supporting the child care providers in our community in whatever ways we can in alignment with their needs. Learn Well has been a major and deeply impactful component of that work and we hope to continue it long into the future.

With gratitude,
Shelby Gomez
Executive Director of Childcare, YMCA Childcare Resource Service

Shelby Gomez

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Watson, Hunter](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:30:08 PM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

First 5 San Diego Commission Public Comment in Support of HDS

I am grateful for the opportunity to bring to your attention one of the ways a reduction in funding to Healthy Development Services (HDS) will have a substantial impact on our communities, particularly in the North Inland region.

The importance of having developmental services such as speech, occupational and physical therapy offered through HDS is critical given the considerable barriers families in our communities face. Children who have Medi-Cal coverage, which is approximately 83% in the North Inland region, are largely authorized to Rady Children's in San Diego. Obstacles such as high gas costs and distances families must travel to access those services contribute to the existing challenge of asking for time off work. Additionally, wait lists for those insurance funded services will inevitably grow due to the decrease of available developmental therapies in HDS as a result of a decrease in funding. Our rural communities of Fallbrook, Ramona, Julian, Borrego, Valley Center/Pauma Valley, and Santa Isabel already experience hardship in accessing essential services, necessitating trips to Escondido. Traveling to San Diego and even Oceanside adds further strain on these families, particularly for working parents and caregivers with less flexibility. Many of our immigrant families are already experiencing fear in even traveling outside their own neighborhoods.

We value the relationships we have established with our external early intervention partners through our regional school districts and the San Diego Regional Center. Together, our efforts in supporting families by either providing services or linking eligible children beyond HDS, ensures that no child falls through the cracks.

Thank you for allowing me to share this information and for your commitment to the health and development of young children. Your consideration of these concerns as you make decisions regarding funding is profoundly appreciated.

Tara Dominguez