



March 21, 2025

First 5 Commission of San Diego
9655 Granite Ridge Dr.
San Diego, CA 92123

Dear Fellow First 5 San Diego Commissioners:

It is with great regret that I will not be able to attend the upcoming First 5 San Diego meeting to engage with you all directly. The ongoing conversation about our future funding strategy is an incredibly important one and I hope to provide clarity on my perspective through this letter.

As we all know, we are making these decisions in times of immense uncertainty but we must do the best we can with the information available to us. Upon looking over the available data and numbers, I am supportive of the proposal that has been put forward by Executive Director Alethea Arguilez. Given our health initiatives like Healthy Development Services, heavier dependency on First 5 funding, and the reality that there are no alternative developmental screening services available for children ages 0-5 with mild to moderate delays throughout the County, we should be prioritizing funding for our health initiatives moving forward. I believe this strategy will lead to the most impactful and equitable long-term outcomes, prioritizing early intervention, and helping children achieve their developmental milestones in many cases and also preventing the progression of mild to moderate to severe delays in others. This will ultimately result in better long term social, educational, and financial outcomes for children and their families.

I also want to highlight the importance of our continued efforts to secure alternative funding to support First 5 programming. I believe in our efforts to optimize participation levels; we must do everything possible to keep First 5 San Diego programs universally affordable. Many families who need these services will fall outside of Medi-Cal's highly restrictive income requirements, but still not be able to afford these services as they navigate historically high costs for housing, child care, transportation, groceries, utilities, and other necessities of life. With that said, I am requesting that First 5 San Diego leadership please keep the Commission as up to date as possible on efforts related to contracting with our local Medi-Cal and Commercial Managed Care Plans for services, how we can be supportive in helping care providers secure contracts with sustainable reimbursement rates, as well as how we can be supportive in attaining additional funding to supplement costs for families who need these vital services.

I want to extend my appreciation to my fellow commissioners as we navigate these challenging times. Funding cuts are never easy, especially for programs that serve children throughout our region. I also want to extend my appreciation for the many partners who have served with First 5

San Diego for many years. Your efforts have helped provide crucial services and supports for some of our region's most vulnerable children and those accomplishments should be appreciated and celebrated. Thank you to everyone who supports First 5 San Diego for your ongoing effort, collaboration, and partnership.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Monica Steppe", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe
County of San Diego Board of Supervisors, Fourth District