

Press Release



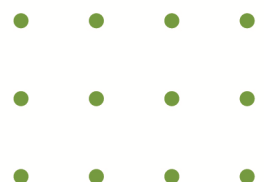
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California’s First 5 leaders at State Capitol Advocating for Early Childhood Investments Amidst Tobacco Tax Revenue Decline *Proposed one-time funding set to alleviate cuts and ensure sustained services for California's youngest children and families*

SACRAMENTO, CA (February 7, 2024) - Hundreds of First 5 leaders from across California who collectively serve over one million of the state’s children and caregivers are rallying in the Capitol, calling for a one-time \$100 million investment, aimed to stabilize various local programs serving children and families amidst dwindling tobacco tax revenues that fund these programs. This investment would support the continuation of a broad spectrum of areas including parenting programs, family resource centers, early childhood mental health services, and child care and early learning support programs among others.

Since California voters passed Proposition 31 in 2022 - the flavored tobacco ban – First 5 programs, funded primarily by tobacco tax revenues, are predicted to face a drastic cut of over \$400 million in early childhood community investments in the next five years. To date, over 42 percent of First 5s have already implemented program cuts this year with 60 percent planning for cuts for fiscal year 2024-25 which begins on July 1.

“Failure to secure a short-term, stop-gap investment this year from the state will result in the elimination of even more services and programs currently supporting the healthy development of California's youngest residents, the majority of them children of color growing up in low-income households,” said First 5 Association Board President Fabiola González. “While we are also focused on long-term policy solutions, First 5s in each county cannot afford to see their contributions undervalued or their potential delayed by budget constraints.”



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Without this crucial, short-term funding from the state, programs supporting tens of thousands of young children – many low-income and children of color – face immediate cuts or elimination. First 5 leaders believe that the cost of banning flavored tobacco should not be carried by California’s babies, toddlers, and preschoolers.

“Investment for California’s youngest children should be prioritized, even in tough budget years,” said Avo Makdessian, Executive Director of First 5 Association. “Focusing on our local communities is how we provide long-term solutions to the most pressing issues California’s youngest children and families face.”

In addition to program impacts, operational reductions in the 58-county First 5 network means they will have struggle to coordinate local early childhood services or serve as contract managers for CalAIM (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal) community partners – a less known but crucial role that First 5s play in California.

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About

The First 5 Association of California (F5AC) elevates the voice of the 58 county First 5s, created by voters in 1998 to ensure our youngest children are healthy, safe and ready to thrive in school and life. The First 5 Network impacts the lives of more than 1 million kids, families and caregivers each year. F5AC advocates for the state’s youngest kids, uniting partners and leveraging funding to improve and scale up California’s early childhood programming piloted by county First 5s. Learn more at www.first5association.org

