



Commission Meeting

A G E N D A

Monday, April 8, 2024, 6:00 pm

First 5 Contra Costa, Conference Center

4005 Port Chicago Hwy., Suite 120, Concord CA 94520

3001 Advantage Way, Sacramento, CA 95834

The Commission meeting will be accessible in-person and via virtual webinar to all members of the public. Persons who wish to address the Commission during public comment or with respect to an item on the agenda may call in during the meeting by dialing 669-444-9171 or 669-900-6833 or use the "raise your hand" feature in the Zoom app. The Commission Chair may reduce or eliminate the amount of time allotted to read comments at the beginning of each item or public comment period depending on the number of comments and the business of the day. Your patience is appreciated.

Virtual Webinar Information:

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89192239770>

Webinar ID: 891 9223 9770

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

2.0 Closed Session

Public Employee Performance Evaluation (Gov. Code § 54957.6)

Title: Executive Director

3.0 Public Comment

The public may comment on any item of public interest within the jurisdiction of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission. In accordance with the Brown Act, if a member of the public addresses an item not on the posted agenda, no response, discussion, or action on the item may occur.

4.0 Approve the Minutes from the February 12, 2024 Commission Meeting.

Action

5.0 Approval of Consent Calendar

A Commissioner or member of the public may ask that any of the following consent items be removed from the consent calendar for consideration under Item 4.

Action

5.1 Approve the Contracts Docket.

5.1.1 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to exercise an option with Sean McCauley Investments, Inc. to lease Suites C & F at 300 H Street, Antioch, CA, as the Antioch First 5 Center from April 1, 2024 and shall continue as a month-to-month tenancy, at \$1,789.66 for Suite C and \$1,797.63 for Suite F. In addition, First 5 will pay \$205.20 for Suite C and \$206.10 for Suite F for a total of \$411.30 each month as its share of the common area maintenance costs ("CAM Charges") for the building. FY2023-24 budget line: Strengthening Families Initiative: First 5 Centers (\$3,567,529). Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.

5.2 Approve the Grants Docket.

5.2.1 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to apply for and, if awarded, execute a grant agreement with Little Free Library, in an (cont.) amount not to exceed \$12,300.00 for in-kind supplies to establish 6 "Little Free



Libraries" in community sites in East Contra Costa County, stocked with books from the organization's "Read in Color" program for the term June 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024. FY 2023-24 budget line: Early Childhood Education Initiative: Ready Kids East County School Readiness (\$189,264). Funded 100% Little Free Library.

5.2.2 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute an agreement amendment with Contra Costa Office of Education to increase the payment limit by \$4,813.00 (from \$251,119.00 to \$255,932.00) for California State Preschool Program (CSPP) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant coaching and assessment services to state funded preschool programs. FY2023-24 budget line: Early Childhood Education Initiative: Early Learning Quality (\$487,032). Funded 100% Contra Costa County Office of Education.

5.3 **Accept the Minutes from the Special Executive Committee Meeting on Dec. 18, 2023.**

5.4 **Accept the Minutes from the Executive Committee Meeting on Feb. 12, 2024.**

5.5 **Appoint Chair to serve as negotiator for unrepresented employee: Executive Director.**

5.6 **Accept the Executive Director's March/April Report.**

5.7 **Accept the Report of Ready Kids East County: The Start of a Movement to Change Early Childhood Systems 2019-2023 prepared by staff.**

6.0 **CONSIDER for discussion any items removed from the Consent Calendar.** Discussion

7.0 **CONSIDER approving proposed First 5 Contra Costa Budget Fiscal Year 2024-25.** Action

8.0 **Public Hearing on the First 5 California 2022-23 Annual Report** Action

The entire report can be found at this [LINK](#).

The Contra Costa County Commission highlights found on page 33.

9.0 **RECEIVE and ACCEPT Staff Recommended Advocacy Strategies in FY24/25 presented by First 5 Contra Costa Staff Advocacy & Stakeholder Engagement Work Group.** Action

10.0 **Recognize Kathy Marsh for 9 years of service as First 5 Contra Costa Commissioner.**

11.0 **Executive Director's Report**

12.0 **Communications**

- **Bay Area First 5s Executive Directors Letter - CalAIM Section 1115 Continuous Coverage for Children**



- **AB 2982 (Reyes) - Bright Beginnings Act – Fact Sheet**
- **Assemblymember Pellerin Request Letter - First 5 Funding**

13.0 Commissioner F.Y.I. Updates

14.0 Adjourn

The First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities planning to participate in Commission meetings who contact the Commission's offices, at least 48 hours before the meeting, at (925) 771-7300.

Any disclosable public records related to an open session item on a regular meeting agenda and distributed by the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission to a majority of members of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission less than 96 hours prior to that meeting are available for public inspection at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520 during normal business hours.

In consideration of those who may suffer from chemical sensitivities or who may have allergic reactions to heavy scents, First 5 Contra Costa requests that staff and visitors refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or the use of strongly scented products in the work place. We thank you for your consideration of others.



Commission Meeting

MINUTES

Monday, February 12, 2024, 6:00 pm

Location: First 5 Contra Costa, Conference Center

4005 Port Chicago Hwy., Suite 120, Concord CA 94520

1516 Kamole Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96821

Carrera 2b 66 #28 Bogota, Colombia

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair John Jones called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Commissioners present during roll call were:

District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández, Vice-Chair
District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha
District 3: Alternate Bella Merrill
District 5: John Jones, Chair
District 5: Alternate LaTrena Robinson (Remote, Just Cause)
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen (Remote)
Health Department: Alternate Dr. Sefanit Mekuria
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart

Commissioners not present during roll call were:

District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli
Board of Supervisors: Alternate Supervisor Ken Carlson
Children & Families Services: Kathy Marsh
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

2.0 Public Comment

No comment from the public.

3.0 Approve the Minutes from the December 18, 2023, Commission Meeting.

The Chair asked if there were any questions regarding item 3.0. There were none.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes from December 18, 2023.

Commissioner Marilyn Cachola Lucey made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Rocio Hernandez to approve the minutes.

Roll call of vote:

YES: District 5: John Jones, Chair

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District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández, Vice-Chair
District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen
Health Department: Alternate Dr. Sefanit Mekuria
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart

NOs: None

ABSTAIN: None

Absent: District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley
Board of Supervisors: Alternate Supervisor Ken Carlson
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli
Children & Families Services: Kathy Marsh
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

4.0 Approval of Consent Calendar. *A Commissioner or member of the public may ask that any of the following consent items be removed from the consent calendar for consideration under item 5.0.*

The Chair called for a motion to approve the Consent Calendar.

Executive Director Dr. Ruth Fernández requested to remove item 4.5 Executive Committee meeting minutes from the Consent Calendar for approval at a later date, once they have been approved by the Executive Committee.

Commissioner Marilyn Cachola Lucey made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar, seconded by Commissioner Mary Helen Rocha.

Roll call of vote:

YES: District 5: John Jones, Chair
District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández, Vice-Chair
District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen
Health Department: Alternate Dr. Sefanit Mekuria
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart

NOs: None



ABSTAIN: None

Absent: District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley
Board of Supervisors: Alternate Supervisor Ken Carlson
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli
Children & Families Services: Kathy Marsh
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

5.0 CONSIDER for discussion any items removed from the Consent Calendar.

Executive Director Dr. Ruth Fernández requested to remove item 4.5 Executive Committee meeting minutes from the Consent Calendar for approval at a later date, once they have been approved by the Executive Committee.

6.0 RECEIVE the presentation of the Conflict of Interest Laws pertinent to the Commissioners and staff by Kurtis C. Keller, Deputy County Counsel.

Deputy County Counsel, Kurtis Keller introduced himself and his role in advising County appointed boards, County affiliated boards, and Commissions by providing advice and guidance on issues related to Conflicts of Interest and disclosure requirements. He provided information on how to identify potential conflicts and advised individuals on requirements for reporting potential conflicts.

7.0 RECEIVE presentation from Anna Powell, Senior Research & Policy Associate from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, UC Berkeley on the completed report on The Early Care and Education Workforce of Contra Costa County.

Anna Powell of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, presented on the Early Care and Education Workforce Study. The process began in early 2023 and reporting from survey collection and analysis was completed in early 2024. Anna gave an overview of three data groupings: County Workforce Profile, Workforce Well-Being, and Stability in the Field and highlighted several key points and conclusions reached from survey results.

8.0 RECEIVE staff presentation on Fiscal Updates.

An update was made to the slides for this presentation and vote was taken to accept the late changes made after the posting deadline.

Commissioner Marilyn Cachola Lucey made a motion to approve the updated materials, seconded by Commissioner Rocio Hernández.

Roll call of vote:

YES: District 5: John Jones, Chair



District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández, Vice-Chair
District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha
District 5: John Jones, Chair
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen
Health Department: Alternate Dr. Sefanit Mekuria
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart

NOs: None

ABSTAIN: None

Absent: District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley
Board of Supervisors: Alternate Supervisor Ken Carlson
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli
Children & Families Services: Kathy Marsh
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Pankti Clerk gave an update on the general state of First 5 revenues and expenses and presented an overview on the current and updated projections of the fund balance.

9.0 Executive Director's Report

Ruth Fernandez highlighted current events at First 5 and presented a preview of upcoming items for the April Commission meeting. She shared that Finance Director, Pankti Clerk will be leaving First 5 Contra Costa.

10.0 Communications

None.

11.0 Commissioner FYI Updates

12.0 Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.

The First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities planning to participate in Commission meetings who contact the Commission's offices, at least 48 hours before the meeting, at (925) 771-7300. Any disclosable public records related to an open session item on a regular meeting agenda and distributed by the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission to a majority of members of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission less than 96 hours prior to that meeting are available for public inspection at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520 during normal business hours. In

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consideration of those who may suffer from chemical sensitivities or who may have allergic reactions to heavy scents, First 5 Contra Costa requests that staff and visitors refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or the use of strongly scented products in the workplace. We thank you for your consideration of others.

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**Special Executive Committee Meeting
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, December 18, 2023, ~ 5:00-6:00pm
4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520**

1.0 Convene and call to order.

Chair John Jones called the meeting to order at 5:14 p.m.

In attendance: John Jones, Matt Regan, Marilyn Cachola-Lucey, and Dr. Rocio Hernández

Staff present: Executive Director, Dr. Ruth Fernández (remote), Policy, Strategy & Evaluation Director, Sandra Naughton; Finance and Operations Director, Pankti Clerk (Zoom); Human Resources Manager, Tammy Henry.

2.0 Public Comment.

No public comment.

3.0 Approve the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of November 29, 2023.

Commissioner Regan motioned to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2023 Executive Committee meeting. Commissioner Lucey seconded.

Roll-call Vote:

John Jones – Yes

Rocio Hernandez – Yes

Marilyn Lucey - Yes

Matt Regan – Yes

Motioned approved.

4.0 RECEIVE presentation of the findings from the commissioned organizational Compensation and Classification Study from Koff and Associates.

Executive Committee received an overview presentation from Katie Kaneko, Managing Director, Koff & Associates. Koff & Associates representative provided an overview of the purpose, methodology, study findings, and recommendations to the Executive Committee. Overall, the study showed First 5 Contra Costa base salaries are on average 3% above market median and including total compensation First 5 is 10% over market median. Committee members asked clarifying questions about the timeline and methodology for data collection.

5.0 CONSIDER accepting the report on significant program, financial or contracts matters, and on any personnel matters relating to Commission staff.

5.1 Receive updates from ED related to the Compensation and Classification Study:

Executive Director Dr. Ruth Fernández provided further detail regarding the changes to staff classifications and salary analysis based on the completed study by Koff & Associates. She expanded on the purpose of the study to ensure Commission staff are paid on a fair and competitive basis, based on the market; ensure staff are working within the appropriate classifications; increase equity in pay across classifications; and to increase transparency as a public entity. Ruth also provided examples of how the new proposed salary schedule would impact staff.

5.2-5.4

No further staff updates provided in this item due to time constraints.

6.0 REVIEW agenda items for upcoming Commission Committee Meetings.

No discussion held for this item.

7.0 Communications

8.0 Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.



**Executive Committee Meeting
MINUTES**

**Monday, February 12, 2024, 5:00-6:00pm
4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520**

1.0 Convene and call to order.

Chair John Jones called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

In attendance: John Jones, Marla Stuart, Vidya Iyengar

Absent: Matt Regan

Staff present: Executive Director, Dr. Ruth Fernández; Policy, Strategy & Evaluation Director, Sandra Naughton; Finance and Operations Director, Pankti Clerk; Human Resources Manager, Tammy Henry; Executive Assistant, Mikele Nelson.

2.0 CLOSED SESSION – Public Employee Performance Evaluation (Gov. Code § 54957.6)

Chair John Jones moved the meeting into a Closed Session at 5:05p.m. and resumed the meeting at 5:47p.m.

3.0 Public Comment.

No public comment.

4.0 Approve the Minutes of the Special Executive Committee Meeting of December 18, 2023.

Marla Stuart and Vidya Iyengar abstained. Chair Jones tabled the approval of the meeting minutes to check with County Counsel about the process of approving minutes with new Executive Committee members.

5.0 CONSIDER accepting the report on significant program, financial or contracts matters, and on any personnel matters relating to Commission staff.

5.1 Receive updates from Finance and Operations Director

Pankti Clerk provided a high-level report and shared an update on the general state of First 5 revenue, noting where the fund balance is now and where it will be in the near future. Pankti noted there will be less of a decline in the fund balance than what was originally projected, as well, she shared actuals and projections for year end and upcoming years.

5.2 Receive updates from HR Manager

Tammy Henry provided a report on the amendments to the approved First 5 Contra Costa Employee Compensation and Benefits Resolution No. 2023/01.

5.3 Receive updates from Executive Director

Ruth Fernandez highlighted current events at First 5 and presented a preview of upcoming items for the April Commission meeting. She shared that Finance Director, Pankti Clerk will be leaving First 5 Contra Costa.

6.0 Communications - None

7.0 Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March/April 2024



Internal Updates

Internal updates are non-programmatic and highlight operational activities and internal efforts.

Staffing

On March 21, First 5 Contra Costa staff came together to give Pankti Clerk, Finance and Operations Director a fond farewell. Pankti recently announced her decision to leave First 5 to focus on important health and family milestones. The staff celebrated Pankti's contributions and gave her a warm sendoff.

Retirements

Kim Stadlander, Quality Improvement Coach Coordinator, has announced her retirement after 10+ years of service at First 5 Contra Costa coordinating and implementing site-level quality coaching services for early care and education programs countywide. Kim's last day will be June 4, 2024. We are grateful for Kim's leadership and contributions to advancing the goals of the Contra Costa Quality Matters Program aimed at improving the quality of early learning settings in the County.

Recruitment in Process

Recruitment for the Finance and Operations Director and Deputy Director roles will begin in April. Also, recruitment for the Early Childhood Program Officer role to lead First 5's Early Intervention is in its final phase of second interviews with top candidates which will take place in early April.

Staff Capacity Building

On April 29, First 5 Contra Costa will host a Spokesperson Training for staff. This will be the second training offered to staff and facilitated by our consultants Full Court Press Communications. The training is focused on strengthening and practicing key messages when speaking with external partners, families, and other community partners and stakeholders about First 5 Contra Costa.

Early Childhood Education

*Our **Early Childhood Education (ECE)** initiative aims to ensure that all children have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early learning.*

New Report Reflecting on Ready Kids East County

The report, *Ready Kids East County: The Start of a Movement to Change Early Childhood Systems*, describes how this place-based school readiness effort began and developed over its first five years. The report identifies the key partners, including the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation which co-funded the effort, and the impact the effort has had to date on families, organizations and communities. The report provides perspectives from parent participants, service providers funded to develop and deliver services to the community, and lessons learned from First 5 Contra Costa and its partners. You can download the report from our website at bit.ly/ready-kids-east-county-report

Coming Up Next

First 5 Contra Costa is excited to be funding CocoKids to deliver a new training to ECE providers called *Reframing Challenging Behaviors from a Sensory Lens*. This in-person training will be offered twice in April at the First 5 Contra Costa Training Center and will explore sensory processing and its crucial role in child development, learning, and the program setting. Providers will learn about sensory tools and strategies that can support children of all abilities. As a bonus, upon completing the training, providers will receive a sensory kit containing some of the discussed tools. This work is part of the inclusion project

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March/April 2024



First 5 Contra Costa is coordinating with the county Measure X sales tax funding dedicated to this purpose.

Early Intervention

Our **Early Intervention (EI)** initiative aims to ensure that families have access to prevention and early intervention supports and services that foster the optimal development of all children.

Triple P Services

In partnership with C.O.P.E. Family Support Center, First 5 Contra Costa was awarded a grant from the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. The funds will allow for the expansion of Triple P services that support increasing parent's and caregiver's competence in promoting healthy development and management of common behavioral and development needs of children. Through this service expansion families will have access to positive parenting topic-based seminars and one-on-one coaching support. Target populations for this grant include Black, Latinx, LBGTQ+ and unhoused families. Successful launch of these services took place March 14.

ASQ Online Pilot

Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD) is piloting Social Emotional screening for their incoming TK and Kindergarten students using the ASQ Online platform. We are excited to partner with PUSD to make screening accessible to families and implanting a tool that will provide educators with useful information. ASQ scores will offer insight to children's social emotional and behavioral needs prior to entering the classroom and allowing educators to consider possible resources, environmental changes and in classroom strategies.

Coming Up Next

First 5 Contra Costa is contracting with the non-profit Cardea Services to conduct a comprehensive and equity-driven participatory process to understand the current landscape of inclusive early learning spaces, resources for early childhood educators and families. The goal is to learn about the existing infrastructure of the Early Childhood Education system in offering inclusive early learning environments and supporting services for educators—this process will include a series of interviews with service providers. In addition, we will partner with Cardea to also conduct a series of focus groups to hear from caregivers of children with diverse developmental abilities, adults with disabilities, and early learning service providers about their experiences accessing inclusive early learning environments. This focus group schedule is below:

ECE providers

- FCCs: Monday, April 22, 6pm
- Centers: Tuesday, April 23, 6pm

Parents/Caregivers:

- Thursday, May 16, 7:30pm
- Thursday, May 23, 12pm

Advocates & Folks with Lived Experience

- Tuesday, May 21, 3pm

For more information, visit: [Supporting Inclusive Early Care & Education Environments at first5coco.org](https://www.first5coco.org)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March/April 2024



Strengthening Families

*Our **Strengthening Families (SF)** initiative helps families build healthy relationships, strengthen support systems, and nurture their children's development.*

Home Visiting Workshop Training Series:

1st Workshop: Responding Rather than Reacting: A Body-Mind-Emotion Approach for Home Visitors to Increase Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation.

On March 22, Jesse Bernal, LMFT, an Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, facilitated a home visitor provider workshop. Jesse led conversations and activities designed to help home visitors and service providers who conduct home visits with young children and their families understand how our bodies, minds, and emotions automatically respond to challenging situations. The 56 Contra Costa County-based participants who attended this three-hour in-person training at the Pleasant Hill Community Center left with tools and strategies to practice mindful awareness to strengthen and build safe and secure interpersonal relationships with those they work with. Attendees included home visitors, managers and directors of programs using home visiting as the method for service delivery from community-based organizations, nonprofits, and Contra Costa County departments.

This training opportunity, which was the first of four workshops scheduled to be offered in 2024, is included in First 5 Contra Costa's local work plan for the recently awarded First 5 California Regional Home Visiting Technical Assistance and Coordination (HVTAC) Grant. The purpose of the HVTAC grant is to "help counties create sustainable, unified system that supports families with the home visiting services they need and maximize available funding to serve more families."

Coming Up Next

The next workshop in the Home Visiting series takes place on Thursday, June 13, 2024, and will also focus on principles of trauma informed care, but specifically on the different types of stress, chronic stress, and trauma home visitors may encounter.

Family Economic Security Partnership

*The **Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP)** is a public, private and nonprofit collaboration dedicated to increasing the income and building the assets of low-income families and individuals living in Contra Costa County.*

Advocacy Training for FESP Members

Our most recent quarterly meeting on March 11 featured an advocacy training led by two member's agencies of FESP. Each organization covered how and why to engage in advocacy:

- Hailey Solares, Bryan Espinoza, and Jenny Berten from the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano County on centering lived experiences—[click here for the presentation](#)
- Sara Gurdian from the Contra Costa Budget Justice Coalition on the importance of budget advocacy—[click here for the presentation](#)

If you missed the training, you can watch a recording and access other resources offered by the presenters on this [webpage](#).

Coming Up Next

We hope you can join our upcoming hybrid FESP meeting on May 20 from 10-11:30 am at First 5 Contra Costa's office in Concord, or via Zoom (your choice) to learn about the impact of the state budget on families. Laura Pryor from the California Budget & Policy Center will be our guest speaker. Laura will

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March/April 2024



present on the Governor's May version of the state budget and its potential impacts on Contra Costa County families. This meeting will be hybrid, so you can join either via Zoom or in-person at First 5 Contra Costa's office located at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord (walking distance from BART). Register today at this [link](#).

County Updates

A Look Into the Future: Positioning NAMI Contra Costa to Preventively Support Children and Families Impacted by Mental Illness

First 5 Contra Costa's Executive Director, Dr. Ruth Fernandez, was invited to present at an upcoming event on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at the Pleasant Hill Community Center. The event is sponsored by NAMI Contra Costa and CalHOPE in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. Featured speakers include Frank Somerville, Sharing His Story of Healing; Gigi Crowder, Executive Director, NAMI Contra Costa; Alex Briscoe, Mental Health practitioner; Pastor Horacio Jones, Co-Founder of Mental Health Friendly Communities; and Peter Kim, Co-Director of Contra Costa County Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. [Learn more and register for the event here](#).

State Updates

2024 Child Health, Education, and Care Summit: Stronger Starts-25 Years of First 5

On March 25-27, 2024, the First 5 California Commission hosted the 2024 Health, Education, and Care Summit in Oakland. The event sold out and featured at least 19 First 5 County Commissions presenting on several topics. The Summit provided an opportunity to learn about innovative initiatives and practices led by First 5s across the State in partnership with many early childhood system partners and advocates.

We were excited to see a team of 11 First 5 Contra Costa staff attend the Summit this year. Dr. Ruth Fernandez, Executive Director, and Sandra Naughton, Interim Deputy Director, joined three panel presentations with counterparts from other First 5s across the State, Applied Survey Research (ASR), the California Family Resource Center Association (CFRA), First 5 California, and the First 5 Association of California to speak about First 5 Contra Costa's efforts and learnings focused on three topic areas: the First 5 Network's Journey and learning about Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) principles, uplifting existing REDI practices, and discussing how the First 5 Network can continue to center REDI in all it does; using Results Based Accountability (RBA) to measure impact; and about the impact of the First 5 Centers and the value of Family Resources Centers to strengthening families and building protective factors.

Alexina Rojas, Director of the West County First 5 Center presented with Ruth and other State leaders on a panel focused on Family Resource Centers. She spoke about the Contra Costa First 5 Center model and shared testimonials from First 5 Center parents.

Bright Beginnings Act (AB 2982)

The First 5 Association of California is the sponsor of a bill named the Bright Beginnings Act (AB 2982) and Assemblymember Gomez Reyes has agreed to be the bill author. The First 5 Network has been collecting letters of support for AB 2982 to be presented at the Assembly Human Services Committee hearing Tuesday, April 9.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March/April 2024



AB 2982 establishes a statewide Prenatal-to-Three Workgroup to craft recommendations for a 10-year comprehensive, equity-focused prenatal-to-three system policy agenda—the bill's fact sheet is included in the Commission packet.

\$100 Million One-time Budget Ask

Assemblymember Gail Pellerin submitted a support letter to legislative budget leaders in support of the First 5 Network's \$100M one-time funding request that 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. This \$100 million budget request would provide a short-term stop gap for the accelerated revenue reductions precipitated by the passing of Prop 31—the flavors ban for vaping products. 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.

READY KIDS EAST COUNTY

THE START OF A MOVEMENT TO
CHANGE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

2019-2023



A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OF FIRST 5 CONTRA COSTA & THE DEAN AND MARGARET LESHER FOUNDATION

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THE NEED

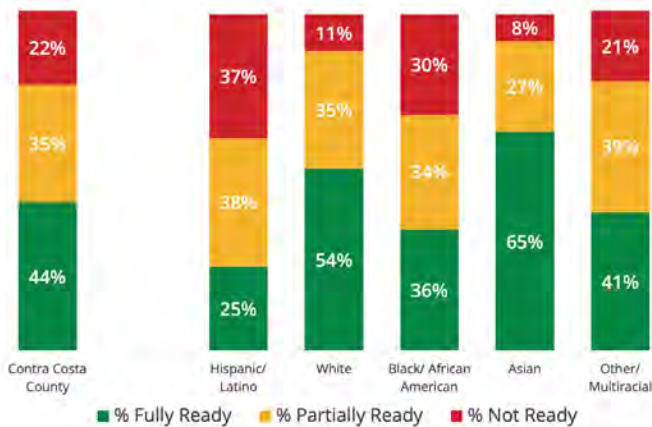
Despite decades passing since researchers first shared the news that high-quality early learning experiences are among those with the highest return on investment, many young children in the Bay Area lag behind peers when it comes to school readiness. In an effort to sound the alarm locally about this issue, First 5 Contra Costa commissioned the first county-wide kindergarten readiness assessment, with participation from 10 school districts. The assessment was completed in 2017 by Applied Survey Research, a pioneer in the field, and resulted in a report called [Ready or Not, Here We Come!](https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/childhood-readiness-assessment/) which estimated that 30% of the African American children assessed countywide were not ready for kindergarten, compared to only 22% of all children assessed. The study also examined differences across school districts, and Pittsburg Unified School District had the largest proportion of students not ready for kindergarten (39% not ready compared to only 8% in San Ramon Unified School District). The report also underscored the importance of a child's well-being impacting their readiness for kindergarten, and the significant role social determinants of health, such as housing, food security, and economic security, play in school readiness.

"I definitely see some changes in curriculum; however, I think there is more to be done. Black history and contributions of folks from the African diaspora should be included in the curriculum for the entire school year rather than just in February."

Parent focus group participant

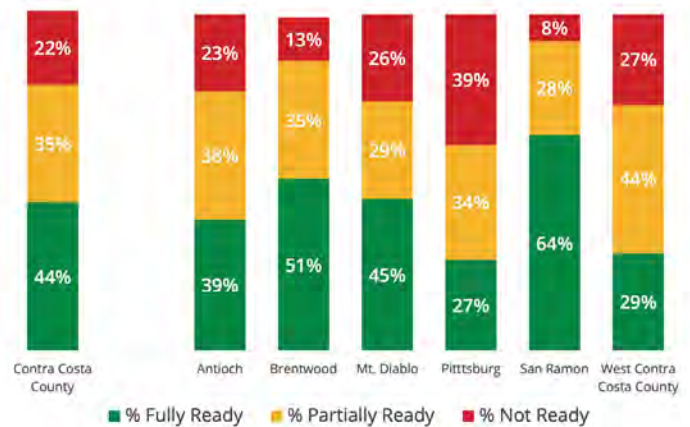
These kindergarten readiness findings echoed other data reports that showed children in portions of East County fall behind their peers in academic achievement, and those disparities are even wider for African American children in East County. At the same time, state-level research confirmed that a major factor reducing the impact of California's education reforms was the lack of readiness among kindergarten students.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS COUNTYWIDE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2017



Source: *Ready or Not, Here We Come!*, Applied Survey Research, 2017. <https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/childhood-readiness-assessment/>

KINDERGARTEN READINESS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT, 2017



Source: *Ready or Not, Here We Come!*, Applied Survey Research, 2017. <https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/childhood-readiness-assessment/>



THE NEED

Around the same time of the rollout of the *Ready or Not, Here we Come! Kindergarten Readiness Assessment*, First 5 Contra Costa was interested in continuing to analyze and reflect upon its own engagement of Black and African American children and families. In 2017, First 5 Contra Costa hired a consultant to conduct a needs assessment of African American families with young children, and to identify best practices on how to effectively serve and support Black and African American families on their school readiness journeys.

The consultant conducted key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and surveys to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of First 5 Costa Contra's service delivery approach to Black and African American children and families. The results of the needs assessment revealed general misperceptions about First 5 Contra Costa's programs, a lack of community awareness of First 5 Centers, and a need for culturally sensitive and diverse environments. The recommendations generated from the report served as a guide and framework for First 5 Contra Costa to restructure some of its program and service delivery models. Greater emphasis was placed on marketing directly to Black and African American families, hiring Black and African American staff, and training staff, volunteers, and contractors in cultural humility.



"There have been programs in existence for all of these years. Those programs have been doing a great job, but not to the level to change the data. [By adopting a collective action approach we have been able to] shift the way some of our partners do their work. It is not that their work isn't excellent, but it didn't create systemic change."

Participant from one of the community efforts researched to inform the development of the Ready Kids East County effort

THE CALL TO ACTION

With this new data, in 2019, First 5 Contra Costa was eager to determine the best path forward to address these racial inequities. By forging a strategic partnership with the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation, the Ready Kids East County effort was launched to improve the trajectories of young children in the region. The effort centered the experiences of African American and Black families in East County, particularly in the city of Pittsburg, and aimed to tackle these challenges on multiple levels to positively impact families in the immediate term, as well as shift institutions and organizations over the long-term. The intention was to view education through an ecological lens that incorporates all the factors, influences, and variables that impact a child's development in their first few years of life. Instead of asking whether a child is ready for kindergarten, we are asking: Are schools, communities and families ready for kindergarten? This allows us to begin reimagining a system that prepares all children.

In its first year of the effort, First 5 Contra Costa hired a consulting firm to conduct key informant interviews with local and regional leaders of community-driven initiatives focused on education, health, and equity. Based on that work and emerging research on how partnerships can tackle complex problems, First 5 Contra Costa adopted a collective action model for the Ready Kids East County effort. Collective action efforts are typically led by a "backbone" organization that facilitates partners through strategies aimed to generate long-term changes to systems, structures, and institutions. Collective action efforts also typically aim to tackle complex challenges through multiple strategies that over time result in significant changes for intended populations.

THE CALL TO ACTION

Multi-pronged Strategy

First 5 Contra Costa developed a logic model to guide the multi-pronged effort. The logic model crystallized the problem, assumptions, stakeholders, and strategies to reach short and long-term outcomes. Its ultimate goal is to ensure that organizations have the information, resources and culture to prioritize and celebrate Black children, while also ensuring that Black children and their families have the support they need to be ready for kindergarten. The logic model, included below, identified several outcomes at the following levels:

Ready Families:

Black families have tools, resources, and relationships to advocate for learning environments where their younger children will thrive.

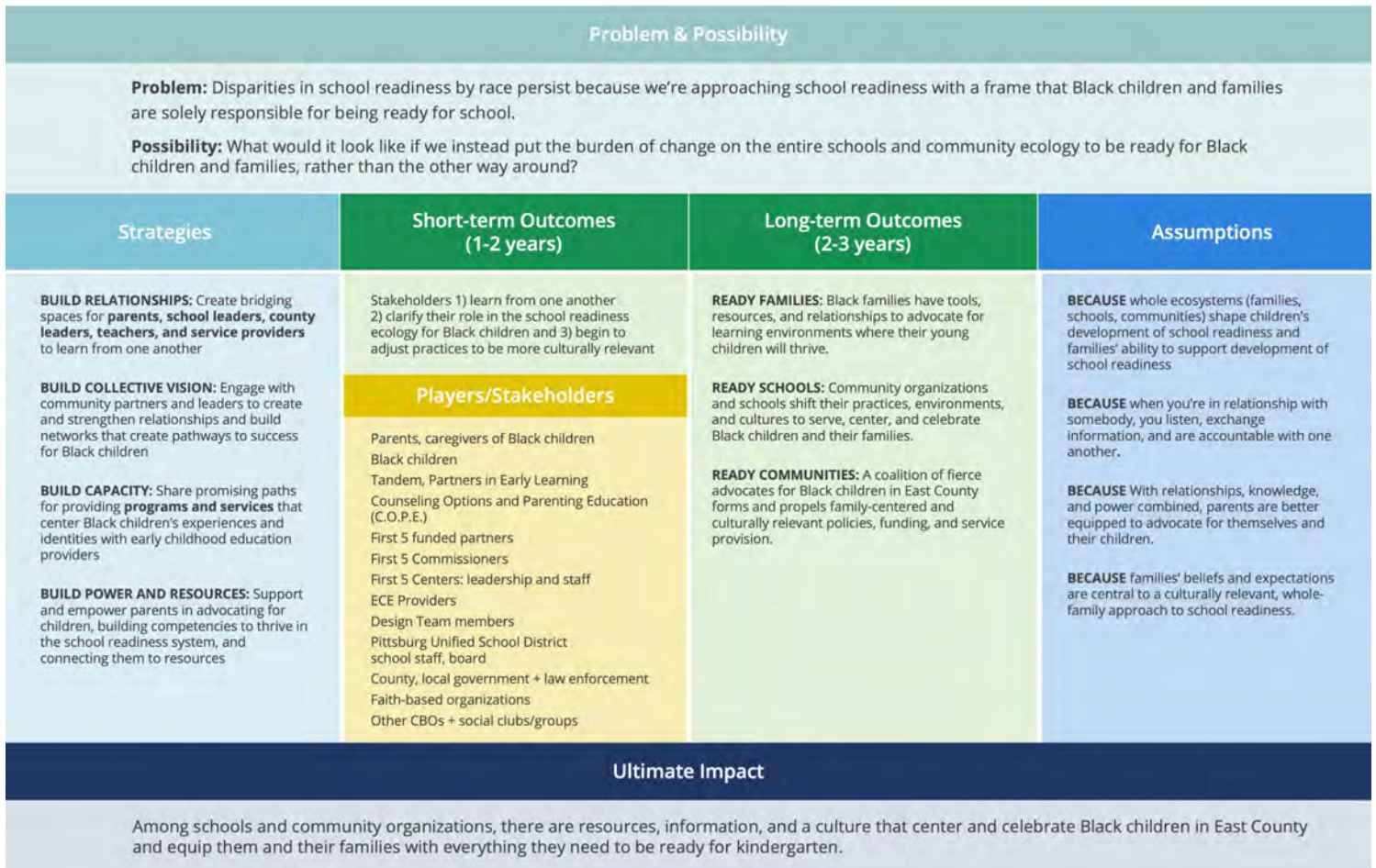
Ready Schools:

Community organizations and schools shift their practices, environments, and cultures to serve, center and celebrate Black children and their families.

Ready Communities:

A coalition of fierce advocates for Black children in East County forms and propels family-centered and culturally relevant policies, funding, and service provision.

READY KIDS EAST COUNTY LOGIC MODEL





THE CALL TO ACTION

First 5 Contra Costa also developed the following statement about core beliefs and values that would guide the work moving forward:

Core Beliefs and Values

Individual and systemic racism is the root cause of school readiness disparities.

The burden of change is on us, not on parents and families of Black children. We must do our part in acknowledging, reckoning with, and repairing the harms of racist policies, structures, and culture.

We redistribute power to families of Black children.

We work in service to them. Black families lead the way, and their voices drive everything we do.

We're humble—no one of us has all the answers.

We have to listen, learn, and work together.

We create brave spaces for mutual learning and open communication, where all of us in the school readiness system can come together and create change.

We value the unique expertise of everyone who touches a Black child's life.

Parents, caregivers, educators, and researchers all contribute knowledge and wisdom to our growing understanding of school readiness.

We advocate for equity.

All families should have access to the resources they need to get their children ready for school.

CENTERING FAMILIES' EXPERIENCE

From its inception, the Ready Kids East County effort focused on engaging community members in the development and direction of efforts. In several ways, the initiative aimed to center the needs and voices of parents of African American and Black children living in East County, as well as the perspectives of various community members and leaders.

Design Team

Committed to engaging a diverse group of individuals from various segments of the Pittsburg community, First 5 Contra Costa invited parents, educators, city officials, local clergy, staff from social service agencies, Pittsburg Unified School District Board members and staff to join a design team. The design team came together multiple times to provide input and guidance to the emerging initiative.

Design Team Members

Phelicia Lang
Antioch School District

La Krisha Dillard
Lynn Center

Pastor Quentisha Davis
Pittsburg United Methodist Church

Shalila Melvin
Marika Hinds
Aspiranet

Willie Mims
*National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People*

De'Shawn Woolridge
*Pittsburg Unified School District
School Board*

Shanelle Scales-Preston
Congressman Mark DeSaulnier's Office

Jenay Clayton
Parent

Savitha Moorthy
Laura Rodriguez
Kaitlin Young
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning

Antoinette Edwards
First Baptist Head Start

Ousha Reed
Parent

Taylor Sims
Lift Up Contra Costa

Candy Duperroir
Parent Voices

Parent Advisory Group

In addition to having parent seats on the Design Team, First 5 Contra Costa created a Parent Advisory Group composed of seven Pittsburg parents to provide feedback and guidance to the effort in its early stages. The advisory group provided input to the Design Team and contributed to the development of another parent-centered strategy: parent cafés.

CENTERING FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES

Parent Cafés

Based on input from the Design Team, First 5 Contra Costa hosted a series of parent cafés, or small meetings with opportunities for parent input, sharing and networking. The intent of these parent cafés was to hear the stories of parents of African American and Black children living in Pittsburg, and use their experiences to shape the focus of the initiative. Simultaneously, the parent cafés provided participating parents with opportunities to expand their social networks, learn about community resources, and develop supportive relationships for their child's development. Each café had a guest speaker and small-facilitated breakout sessions where parents responded to questions based on the session's theme and had the opportunity to share with one another and begin building a sense of community. Each café theme progressed to focus on each area of the eco-system that supports a child in their school readiness journey.

First 5 Contra Costa intentionally recruited African American and Black parents of young children living in Pittsburg. Each session explored a different topic or theme that allowed participants to reflect on their own experiences with the education system.



By the Numbers: Parent Cafés

Number of Cafés: **10**

Unduplicated number of adult participants: **61**

First Series of Parent Cafés



November 16, 2020

Put Your Mask On Boo! Self-Care & Wellness:

the importance of self-care and well-being of parents in order to foster the well-being of their children.

10 attendees



November 30, 2020

I Am My Ancestors' Wildest Dreams!: the importance of fostering ways both parents and children can dream and create their own vision for their future.

8 attendees



December 14, 2020

Building Power with Knowledge!: exploring how systemic racism shows up in early childhood education systems and providing resources to identify ways parents can support their children and advocate for them and systems change.

22 attendees



January 4, 2021

The "Readiness" Game: a panel of speakers from the school settings offered their perspectives on school readiness and strategies that parents can use to support their child's learning experience in a group/classroom.

16 attendees



January 18, 2021

The "Readiness" Playbook: weaving the concepts together in the context of Black Joy, this café took a celebratory and hopeful approach by asking parents to reflect on the gift of their children and concrete examples of how parents can celebrate their child while supporting their development.

26 attendees

"I know black children are held to a higher standard."

Parent at Parent Café

CENTERING FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES

"I see the teachers recognize certain children but other children are not recognized when they are doing the right thing."

Parent at Parent Café

After the initial series of five parent cafés, First 5 Contra Costa held a debrief session with its Parent Advisory Group to review the results from the evaluations completed after each café and discuss continual improvement. The major themes emerging from the parent cafés were:

- Parents expressed challenges related to systemic racism, biased treatment of Black children and a lack of educational supports in the region.
- Parents wanted schools and learning environments to create just spaces that reflect Black children's needs and interests.
- The parent café model was empowering to participants and helped generate direction and guidance for First 5 Contra Costa and its partners.

Once these themes were validated by parent café participants, First 5 Contra Costa presented them to various audiences to expand awareness of the initiative and the experiences of parents of African American and Black children in East County. The findings were shared with the First 5 Contra Costa Commission, First 5 Center Staff, Design Team, Pittsburg Unified School District leadership, and several Rotary Clubs in East County. A key message was underscoring the community's role as a critical element of a child's ecosystem, alongside family and school, in ensuring children are ready for success in school and in life.

Based on the learnings from the parent café series, the Parent Advisory Group and Design Team recommended First 5 Contra Costa hold a second series of parent cafés the following winter. The second series focused more on connecting families to local resources and encouraging parents to be advocates for their children. Across both series of cafés, 61 parents or caregivers participated.

Second Series of Parent Cafés



January 11, 2022

Rooted: Defining Our Own Excellence and The Joy of Learning: What Does It Mean To Be Young, Gifted, and Black? How do we create educational excellence so that Black and African American children, parents, and caregivers can see themselves, and others can also see them in their best light.

6 attendees



January 25, 2022

Cultivating Our Voice—Parents and The Village: How can Black and African American parents and caregivers use their voice to advocate for themselves and their children, build partnerships with educators, and help their children thrive in the education system.

7 attendees



February 8, 2022

Powerful beyond Measure—Strengthening Resilience through Social Emotional Learning: What is adversity and how can Black and African American parents and caregivers use self-love and healthy coping mechanisms to build resiliency.

10 attendees



February 22, 2022

I AM because WE are—Stronger Together: Using relationship building to create a social safety net and enhance educational experiences for Black and African American families.

14 attendees



March 8, 2022

We Are Our Ancestors' WILDEST Dreams!: Re-envisioning school as the space for a broader effort for equity in education, cultivating connections to school instructional services and community resources, as well as exploring school readiness.

19 attendees



READY FAMILIES

First 5 Contra Costa partnered with several service providers to adapt or develop culturally relevant programming specifically aimed at supporting the school readiness of African American and Black children and their families.

By the Numbers: Story Cycles Literacy Program

Number of classrooms served: **319**

Number of classrooms in East County served: **111**

Estimated number of children served in East County: **1,722**

Literacy Programming

We continued our partnership with Tandem, Partners in Early Learning, to enhance children's access to books and adult-child literacy development services through the Story Cycles literacy program at Pittsburg Unified School District preschools and child care providers in East County. For years, First 5 Contra Costa has partnered with Tandem to provide bring-home book bags, professional development workshops on literacy for early care and education providers and parents, and other literacy resources. In 2019, First 5 Contra Costa expanded its support for Tandem's Story Cycles program with 6

additional classrooms in East County. When the pandemic closed most in-person services, Tandem was able to quickly shift into a virtual space, offering virtual story times and workshops for families. Tandem continued to work with existing classrooms and additional classrooms throughout the five-year initiative, serving approximately 319 classrooms countywide, 111 of which were in East County, reaching about 1,722 children over the 5 years.

Tandem also led 90 interactive read aloud demonstrations to promote early literacy practices in the home, collaborating with various organizations, including the county libraries, the Ambrose Community Center, Housing Authority, De Anza Gardens Housing Center in Bay Point, and El Pueblo Housing Center in Pittsburg.

In the fourth year of the initiative, First 5 Contra Costa worked with Tandem to develop math literacy curricula that centered Black and African American experiences.

"It is critical for children to be able to see themselves reflected authentically, and in a positive light, in the messages they receive from their communities and from society at large. Books are one place where those messages can occur."

Tandem, Partners in Early Learning Staff

READY FAMILIES

Drawing from their experiences working with families and service providers in East County, and on promising practices, Tandem developed the Give Me 5 Math Playgroups, and piloted them in East County. The design for this series of five sessions for parent/caregivers and children participating together, was informed by a Parent Advisory Committee formed by Tandem and First 5 Contra Costa staff. The playgroups aim to support children’s foundational math concepts while simultaneously building parents’ skills in embedding math in daily life. The children’s books used as part of the curriculum featured diverse representation. In the first year, 2022, the playgroups were offered once at the Antioch Library and served 25 families. Based on this pilot, Tandem adjusted the model and its outreach strategies and offered an updated version of the program in 2023. In 2023, Tandem led three in-person playgroups and one asynchronous online playgroup. The in-person playgroups were hosted by the East County First 5 Center in April and October 2023, and at the Delta First 5 Center in December 2023.

In an effort to further increase families’ access to literacy materials in East County, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with Tandem to develop a pilot program called “Lil’ Libraries Around Town.” Based on the Barbershop Books program model developed in New York, the program equips ten small businesses in East County with children’s libraries containing age-appropriate and culturally responsive books. Tandem works with the businesses to explore ways to embed the libraries into their operations, and educates the business owners about the importance of early literacy and exposure to literacy-rich environments. To date, approximately 60% of the participating business owners identify as African American or Black, and all of the businesses are located in Pittsburg or Antioch. Although the pilot is still in its initial phase, it is estimated that at least 215 children have enjoyed using the libraries, with many also taking home free books.

Locations of Lil’ Libraries Around Town



Coats Barbershop

601 Railroad Ave., Pittsburg

Owner identifies as African American or Black



KPs Barbershop

15 E 5th St., Pittsburg

Owner identifies as African American or Black



Stay Faded Barber Shop (Brentwood)

50 Sand Creek Rd., Brentwood



Dad’s Barbershop

1900 A St., Antioch

Owner identifies as African American or Black



Lions Den Boxing Gym

640 Cumberland St., Pittsburg

Owner identifies as African American or Black



Stay Faded Barber Shop (Pittsburg)

3724 Railroad Ave., Pittsburg



HIMC Barbershop (Antioch)

3136 Contra Loma Blvd., Antioch



Nunley Karate Dojo

284 East 10th St., Pittsburg

Owner identifies as African American or Black



Studio Blendz

510 Black Diamond St., Pittsburg



HIMC Barbershop (Oakley)

2565a Main St., Oakley

READY FAMILIES

First 5 Centers

Our five First 5 Centers throughout the county help families access the information and services needed to help their children thrive. Research underscores the critical role positive caregiver-child relationships and healthy family dynamics have on children, particularly in their early years. Increasing parents' and caregivers' understanding of child development and parenting can lead to better child and family outcomes. Additionally, many families face challenges accessing health, education, and social services. First 5 Centers help connect families to the resources they need and to programs that focus on strengthening families' abilities to foster children's development, health, and school readiness. Given these critical roles First 5 Centers can play in families' trajectories, First 5 Contra Costa engaged its three centers located in East County in the Ready Kids East County effort.

The First 5 Centers in East County include the centers in Pittsburg, Antioch, and Brentwood. Each center follows the program model that First 5 Contra Costa has co-developed with the community over the last 25 years, and operates through a non-profit organization contracted by First 5 Contra Costa. The services offered on-site and virtually at each center include: parent education, school readiness classes, literacy and arts-based classes, developmental screenings, developmental playgroups, parent leadership opportunities, giveaways of concrete supports such as diapers, wipes, car seats and other items, and connection to community resources (ranging from legal aid to health services to education programs). Despite many centers closing their in-person offerings due to health orders during the beginning of the COVID pandemic, the centers quickly transferred services to a virtual mode to continue to meet families' needs.

Two years before the Ready Kids East County effort began, First 5 Contra Costa began a multi-year effort to examine how responsive its First 5 Centers were to African American and Black families. The process began by holding a focus group of Black and African American parents and caregivers with children under age 6 to ask them about their experiences with the First 5 Centers. Many of the focus group participants did not see themselves or their families reflected in the staffing, programming, and planning of the Centers.

Based on this 2017 exploration and First 5 Contra Costa's learning from the early stages of the Ready Kids East County effort, staff worked with the nonprofits operating the First 5 centers to adapt and develop new program offerings that were culturally relevant to African American and Black families and emphasized



By the Numbers: First 5 Centers in East County

The data below reflects activity at the centers in Antioch, Brentwood and Pittsburg across the five years of the Ready Kids East County effort.

Number of classes offered: **1,342**

Developmental screenings of children ages 0 to 5: **2,481**

Consultation with staff for referral to services: **1,609**

Car seats provided and installed: **83**

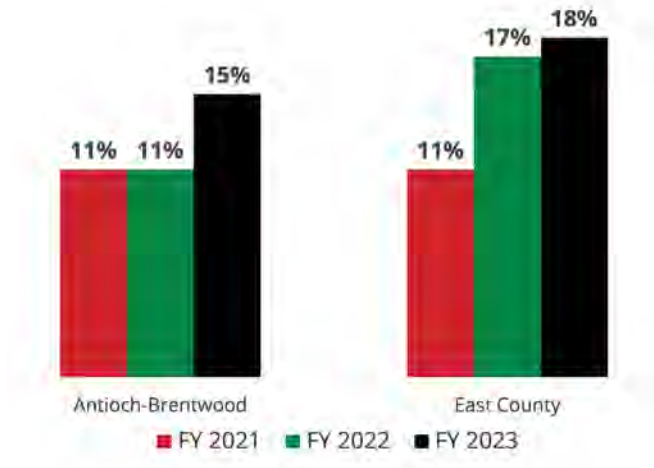
Hours of programming designed specifically for African American/Black families: **350**

Number of African American families participating*: **319**

*Note: Only includes those who identified as African American or Black, and does not include any participants who selected two or more races

READY FAMILIES

INCREASE IN PERCENTAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN & BLACK FAMILIES BY CENTER, FY 2021-FY 2023



Source: Administrative data reported by First 5 Center contractors analyzed by First 5 Contra Costa. Note: Data for the centers in Antioch and Brentwood are combined because they operated under one contract during those years. An African American & Black family is counted if they participated in any services.

school readiness. In 2021, several of the centers in East County began offering parent support groups as well as other programming specifically for those who identify as African American or Black. In addition, each of the centers in East County began working with partners to offer classes and activities that centered the needs and interests of African American or Black families. For example, both the Antioch and Delta First 5 Centers began offering a class called Afro Moms, designed for caregivers to bond and feel supported by other participants while exploring relevant topics. The East County First 5 Center offered a parent support group of its own called Sisters in Parenting as well as Represent Me class which explored the impact African American heroes have made on society. The class used songs and stories to showcase Black creativity and culture.

The Black Women Early Childhood Collective consulted with staff at the East County, Antioch and Delta centers to analyze practices and revamp their outreach strategies to effectively engage Black and African American families in center activities.

As a result of intentionally focusing on the needs of African American and Black families, each First 5

Center increased the proportion of participation of these families. The chart below shows the increase at both the Antioch-Delta centers and the East County First 5 Center in Pittsburg.

Parenting Education

First 5 Contra Costa partnered with Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.) to tailor one-time seminars from the Positive Parenting Program, to ensure they were culturally relevant to African American and Black parents. The Positive Parenting Program is an evidence-based model of parent education. First 5 Contra Costa, in partnership with the county health department, has funded C.O.P.E. to deliver the program countywide to support families.

Based on the planning phase for the initiative, First 5 Contra Costa identified the need to adapt the program offerings to be more relevant and appealing to the parents of African American and Black children. Part of this approach required C.O.P.E. to recruit and hire



By the Numbers: Positive Parenting Program

Number of one-time seminars: **52**

Number of multi-week classes: **65**

Number of African American adult participants*: **190**

*Note: Only includes those who identified as African American or Black, and does not include any participants who selected two or more races



“Parent groups give me an opportunity to socialize with other Black women and give my grandson a chance to be around people like him.”

Parent Group participant

READY FAMILIES

more African American/Black facilitators to lead the seminars, and to develop targeted marketing materials and outreach strategies specifically designed to entice African American and Black families in East County to participate. First 5 Contra Costa staff worked with C.O.P.E. to document lessons learned for their outreach and adjustments to the curriculum.

Despite the pandemic, C.O.P.E. was able to develop an aggressive recruitment plan to engage families, collaborating with non-traditional partners such as Black Chambers of Commerce and faith based organizations in East County. This effort resulted in an increase in participation by parents of Black and African American children.

Parent Group

Building on the momentum generated from the parent cafés and based on parent feedback, First 5 Contra Costa formed a Parent Group. This group met virtually on a weekday evening each month to foster community among parents of African American or Black children, share community resources and child development information, and to develop parents’ skills in advocating for their children. The Parent Group started in April 2022 with 9 parents and expanded to include 30 parents by the end of 2023. Based on input from participants, the Parent Group expanded to also include the following components:

- Informative evening Zoom sessions each month primarily for parents, featuring guest speakers.
- Opportunities for parents and their children to connect with each other through enjoyable and interactive weekend activities.
- A Facebook Group to allow for parents to share resources, solicit and offer advice, and stay in contact in between activities.

By the Numbers: Parent Group

Number of meetings and weekend meetups: **17**

Unduplicated number of regular parent participants: **30**

Estimated number of children 0-5 impacted: **35**

READY FAMILIES

"I really enjoy it when they bring speakers. I can learn new strategies to handle development challenges through my daughter's growth. We can share experiences and learn with peers."

Parent group participant

During virtual monthly meetings, parents had the chance to engage with one another, acquire valuable information, and obtain resources that they could apply in their daily lives. Below are examples of what the monthly sessions included:

- In May 2022, parents had the opportunity to learn valuable early literacy strategies to apply with their young children through a Modeled Read Aloud with Mr. Ty. After the read aloud, 78% of participants said they felt well informed about early literacy after the session, and 78% of participants were interested in receiving more resources for one of the literacy strategies shared.
- In February 2023, Cherese LeBlanc from the Care Parent Network, and Marika Hinds, director at the East County First 5 Center, co-hosted a session about the types of support and resources available to families of children with special needs. A post-session survey found that 54% of participants felt more confident in finding local resources to support their child's development, and 91% expressed their desire for more information regarding parent education.
- In March 2023, Jylani Ma'at led a session on meditation and mindfulness, including tips for managing stress. A post-session survey found that 64% of participants felt more confident in addressing their feelings of stress in positive and healthy ways. All participants provided positive feedback and a majority said they found the breathing exercises to be particularly beneficial and something they intend to incorporate into their lives going forward.



PARENT VIGNETTE

Kristalia, a parent of a one year-old and a four year-old who lives in Antioch, participated in the Ready Kids East County effort from its inception with the very earliest parent cafés and also joined the Parent Group once it started. She and her children have attended classes at the Antioch and Pittsburg First 5 Centers and she's stepped up to act as a parent leader on the Antioch Center's Community Advisory Council. She has tried other parent groups, but found the Ready Kids East County efforts to be the best fit for her. *"The impact is that you meet other parents, you make new mom friends, it's a safe space where you can connect with other moms and learn the resources in your community as well as be able to exchange ideas... kind of like a peer mentorship."* What sets the Ready Kids East County parent group apart, she explained is *"...that it's a safe space for Black moms to be able to talk to one another and not have to deal with or codeswitch, you know the stresses of being in other spaces."*

For the weekend events for the entire family, First 5 Contra Costa identified family-friendly field trips that would provide opportunities for families to learn and have fun together. Below are some examples:

- In May 2023, families enjoyed a visit to the Lindsay Wildlife Experience, a museum and wildlife rehabilitation center in Walnut Creek. A post-event survey found that 75% of participants said their child(ren) engaged in conversation and interacted with other children at the event, and 100% enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other families and were interested in attending future events.

READY FAMILIES

- One of the weekend events was held at the Small World amusement park in Pittsburg in June 2022. A post-event survey found that 50% of participants said they connected with other parents/caregivers and 100% said they would want to attend future events.

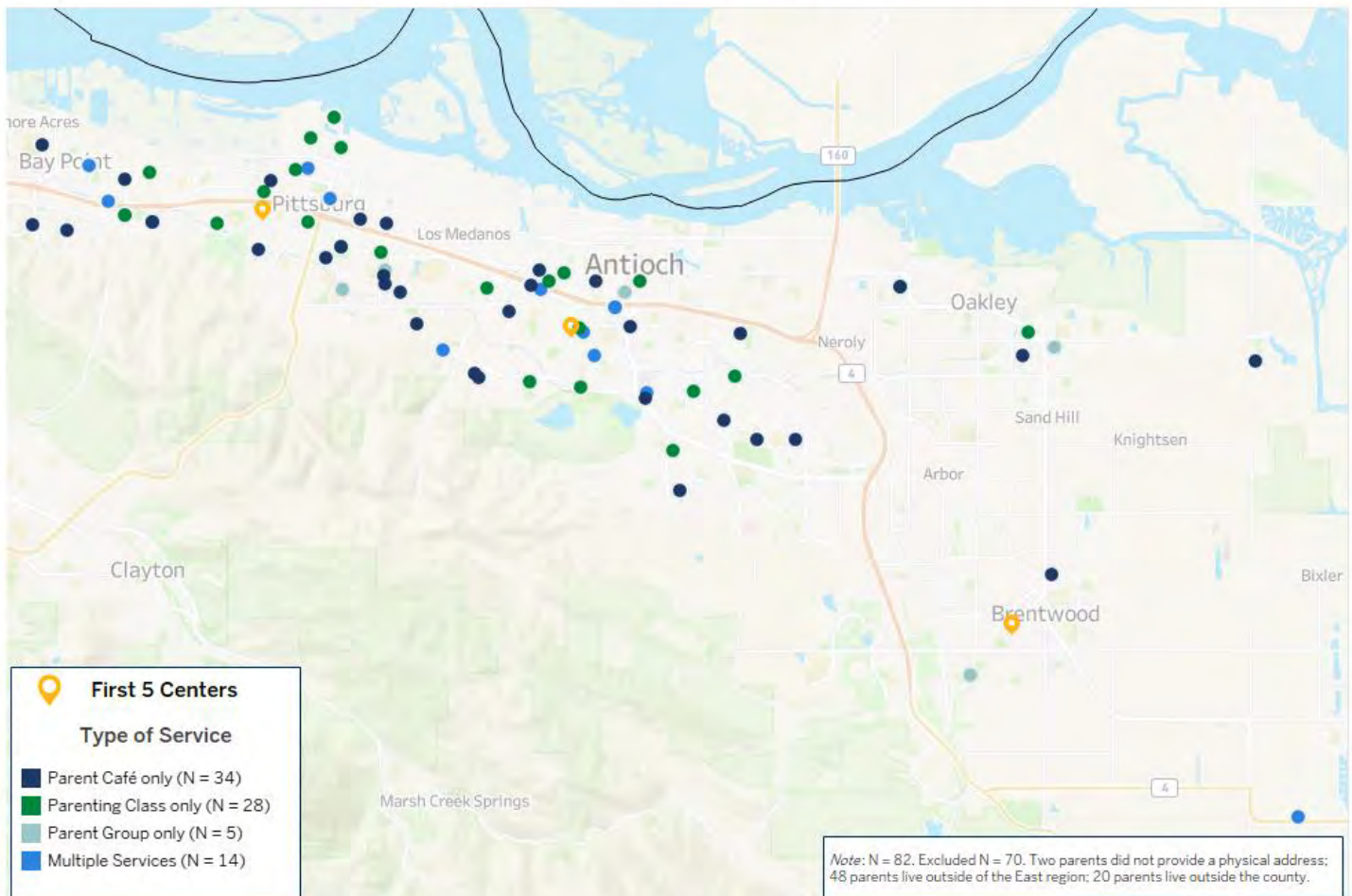
Community Events

In addition to supporting programming tailored to the needs of African American and Black families, First 5 Contra Costa also helped build families' awareness of the effort and related resources at several community events. Whether hosting an information table or networking with families, these community events provided a way for First 5 Contra Costa staff to build a collective vision of what's possible for African American

and Black families, and to connect them to available resources. Some examples of these events included:

- Contra Costa County African American Community Baby Shower hosted by A More Excellent Way Health Organization (2022)
- Literacy Rally hosted by the Souljahs (2022)
- Week of the Young Child Kickoff Event at East County First 5 Center (2023)
- Restoring Hope & Community Resource Fair hosted by the Contra Costa Reentry Network in Pittsburg (2023)
- Pittsburg Unified School District's Community Resource Fair (2023)

PARENTS SERVED BY READY KIDS EAST COUNTY



Developed by Applied Survey Research



"I think it just would be nice to see a program that's tailored to address some of the cultural pieces and cultural concerns of the Black/African American community."

Service provider participating in Ready Kids East County

READY SCHOOLS

First 5 Contra Costa partnered with school districts, early educators, social service agencies and other organizations that work directly with families to help them shift their practices, environments, and cultures to serve, center and celebrate African American and Black children and their families. Many of these efforts focused on providing professional development, or capacity building opportunities for interested practitioners, to help create and expand culturally responsive classrooms and learning environments for African American and Black children.

Working with School Districts

Since the inception of this effort, First 5 Contra Costa aimed to work with school districts in a variety of ways to elevate the needs of African American and Black families in East County. Following the county kindergarten readiness assessment report, First 5 Contra Costa commissioned VIVA Social Impact Partners to conduct four case studies of district operated preschool programs in Contra Costa County. The report intended to highlight how school districts were supporting school readiness and meeting families' needs by operating preschool programs. The report included a preschool "planning checklist" and a companion list of resources with links to important data sources.

Also early in the initiative, First 5 Contra Costa sponsored a delegation of 15 individuals from East County school districts to attend a "Pre K to 3" conference in San Mateo County with the goal of engaging in collective learning and generating ideas for future work across districts. During a debrief meeting with conference attendees, First 5 Contra Costa captured learnings and ideas on how to partner in ongoing ways.

After some of these foundational activities, First 5 Contra Costa established a working relationship with Pittsburg Unified School District. In quarterly meetings with the Superintendent and leaders in the early learning and family support divisions, First 5 Contra Costa shared new insights and information gathered from parents in East County, updates on programs and services that may interest district families, and possible ways for the agency and district to partner in supporting African American or Black children. For example, district staff were invited to attend anti-bias, anti-racist trainings funded by First 5 Contra Costa, and discussed the possibility of conducting a more holistic kindergarten readiness assessment in the future. First 5 Contra Costa and the school district are also exploring ways to integrate developmental screenings for incoming Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten students into their enrollment process.

Titles of 2023 Training Series for Early Educators



A Love Letter to African American Children:

An Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism Approach



A Love Letter to African American Children:

An Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism Approach—Exclusionary Discipline



Culturally Responsive Learning Environments:

Creating Spaces Where All Are Welcomed



Reimagining Family Engagement:

From Power Struggles to Powerful Family Partnerships

“One of the challenges in involving [African American families] in programs is that there is no reflection of their culture and beliefs in the program.”

Service provider participating in Ready Kids East County

“The training made me realize how important the [anti-bias, anti-racist] work is and how it should be integrated across all of the work we do in early childhood.”

Early Childhood Education provider participating in an Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism training

“We NEED MORE conversations like this

Early Childhood Education provider participating in an Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism training

READY SCHOOLS

This would enhance the school district’s ability to know more about the needs of incoming students, and help connect families to resources through the Help Me Grow network First 5 Contra Costa has built over the past two decades. The local Help Me Grow network promotes regular developmental screenings of children to help identify developmental, behavioral, and social-emotional concerns that, if left untreated, can result in poor academic and health outcomes. Help Me Grow also helps connect families with the services they and their families need.

Anti-Bias, Anti- Racist Trainings for Service Providers

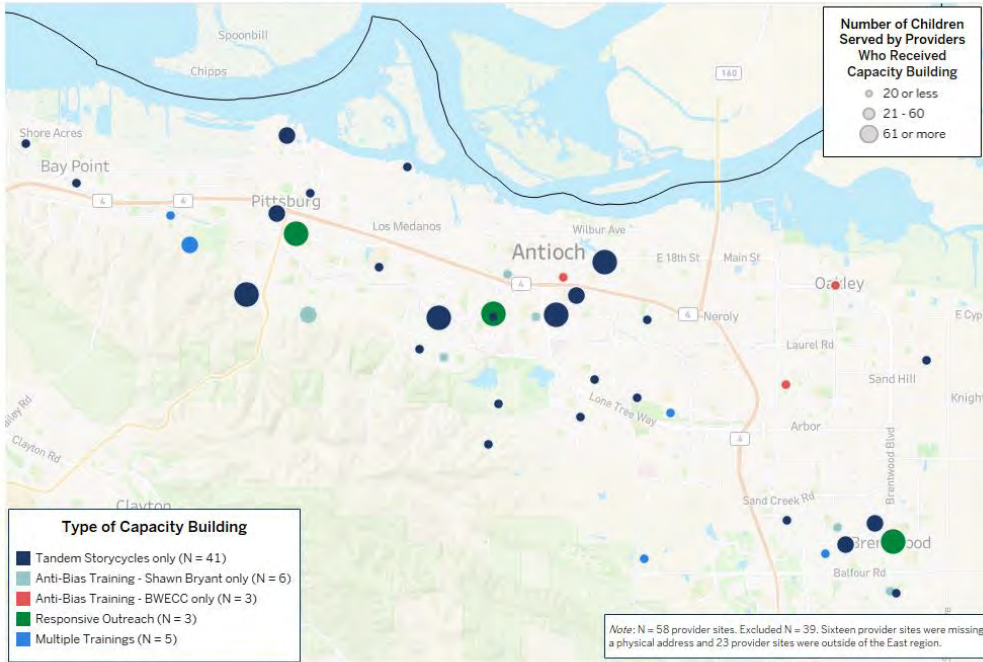
After consulting with service providers and assessing available trainings, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with two trainers to lead capacity building focused on anti-racist approaches for service providers serving East County families.

The first trainer, Shawn Bryant, led five trainings for early childhood educators in 2022. Cumulatively, the sessions engaged 75 providers who collectively serve more than 1,280 children. The early childhood educators learned how to facilitate difficult conversations with children, use tools to implement anti-bias anti-racist (ABAR) approaches, and design equitable math experiences in the classroom.

Building on that work, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with a new emerging local entity called the The Black Women in Early Childhood Collective to offer a four-part training series for providers and educators based in East County. The series explored the development, implementation, and pedagogical framework of ABAR principles in early learning environments. The themes for these trainings were: ABAR Introduction & Exploration, Exclusionary Discipline, Culturally Responsive Learning Environments, and Family Engagement. From August through November 2023, 36 early childhood educators participated in monthly in-person trainings. These providers collectively serve approximately 450 children enrolled in early childhood education programs in Contra Costa County.

The primary objective of the series was to increase competency and comfort in supporting Black and African American children’s school readiness by integrating ABAR principles and exploring various themes and topics related to creating culturally responsive learning environments. After each training, participants completed an evaluation survey. After

PROVIDER SITES SERVED BY READY KIDS EAST COUNTY



Developed by Applied Survey Research



READY SCHOOLS

each training, at least 90% reported that they would alter their teaching practices as a result of the training and most stated that the trainings gave them tools, strategies, and resources to better engage their Black and African American students and their families.

Across both sets of trainings, providers reported they were overwhelmingly satisfied with their experience in the training, with about 70% expressing their intention to make changes to their professional practices.

Convenings for Service Providers

First 5 Contra Costa leveraged existing events and convenings of service providers and others who work directly with young children as opportunities to share what it was learning about the needs of African American and Black families in East County, and the strategies it was testing out through this initiative. Some of these events focused on health providers or early childhood education providers, while others brought together a wide array of providers around a common theme. Here is a partial list of some of these convenings:

By the Numbers: Trainings for Service Providers

Number of trainings: **9**

Number of service providers in trainings: **111**

- Seminar on Trauma and Hope Through An African American Lens held in Oakley in May 2019
- African American Baby Shower in Pittsburg in August 2022
- Early Childhood Mental Health Community Forum at the Pittsburg Senior Center in November 2019 with more than 150 cross-sector community partners
- 3rd Annual Restoring Hope & Community Resource Fair in February 2023
- Pittsburg Unified School District's Community Resource Fair & Free Clinics in October 2023
- East Contra Costa Community Alliance Members Meeting in November 2023 and January 2024

READY COMMUNITIES

“It would be helpful to have everyone in the same room looking at the goals of this initiative and how everyone plays a part there.”

Community Stakeholder

In addition to school district and service provider leaders, First 5 Contra Costa developed relationships with city, county and civic leaders—all in an effort to create communities ready to serve African American and Black children.

Cities

One city that engaged with the Ready Kids East County effort was the City of Pittsburg. First 5 Contra Costa supported the City of Pittsburg’s My Brother’s Keeper landscape analysis and advocated for prioritization of support for young children. During 2022, following a request from Mayor White, First 5 Contra Costa deepened its collaboration with the City of Pittsburg through the My Brother’s Keeper Pittsburg Initiative to address opportunity gaps for boys of color. First 5 staff served as a core partner and advocated to prioritize “Entering School Ready to Learn” and “Reading at Grade Level by 3rd Grade” as key milestones for the effort. Although the City of Pittsburg ultimately chose to focus their effort on teens and young adults, participating in the process yielded some opportunities to connect with new partners such as Souljah’s, Pittsburg Youth Development Center, and Lincoln Families. In addition, First 5 staff continue to explore collaboration opportunities with the City of Pittsburg staff.

Civic Groups

First 5 Contra Costa staff also partnered with the Pittsburg Rotary Club to present to its members about the effort, which then led to partnering with them on a literacy event they sponsored to boost families’ access to local literacy resources.

County Agencies

The Contra Costa County Library was a partner from the start of the effort. After a December 2022 convening of Ready Kids East County partners which focused on sharing key learnings from organizations’ work with African American and Black families, Bella Merrill, a librarian in the Early Literacy Outreach Services department for the county library, was inspired by the discussion. After working with her colleagues, the library piloted a new event called, “BeLoved: A Kindergarten Readiness Day for Families of Black Children” in April 2023 at the Hercules Library. The event featured a story hour featuring local author and educator Phelicia Lang, various activity stations focused on building and practicing early literacy skills to support future school success. There was also a Transitional Kindergarten teacher from the West Contra Costa Unified School District on hand to assist families with the district’s kindergarten registration process.

“I think across our systems we could be better at being aligned with what we know and how we communicate with other families in the community.”

Community Stakeholder



LESSONS LEARNED & THE ROAD AHEAD

The journey of the last five years has been full of successes, challenges and learning. While we have highlighted the successes and impact to date on families, schools and the community, we believe it is equally important to highlight some of the key lessons we have learned. No systems change effort makes progress without setbacks, unforeseen challenges, and obstacles. Reflecting on these challenges only helps us adjust and adapt our plans as we continue to forge ahead on this journey to transform East County. Below are a few of the most critical lessons we learned on our journey:

- **To change families' experience of our systems, we must continually keep families at the center.** This effort began with parent cafés, which were designed to gather the input and experiences of families with African American and Black children living in East County. We used the information gathered from those parent cafés to shape the effort's strategies. While we had not initially planned to sustain those parent cafés beyond the initial phase of developing the effort, we pivoted based on feedback from parents. The parents told us the type of space we created through the cafés—where they could connect with other Black families and speak candidly about their fears and struggles—did not exist elsewhere. So, rather than our original plan to support other organizations to offer services responsive to African American families, we launched a monthly parent group specifically for African American or Black parents led by our staff. While meeting the families' immediate needs, this group also provided ongoing guidance to the effort.
- **Offering responsive programming extends beyond the programming itself—it involves how you staff and market the programming.** We worked with nonprofit service providers to ask the African American families they serve what type of additional programming they would be interested in. From that input, service providers created new services that directly addressed the needs and interests of Black families. Yet several of those efforts were not successful until the service providers intentionally recruited staff reflective of the community they were seeking to serve. Additionally, we learned that intentionality was also needed in outreach strategies for flyers, social media and other techniques to effectively result in more participation by African American families.



LESSONS LEARNED & THE ROAD AHEAD

- **Constant and multiple modes of communication between partners is key.** Our effort began with an emphasis on in-person gatherings for each type of partner—a meeting of service provider partners and one for systems partners. We prioritized coming together in shared physical spaces to build connections, share ideas and updates, and co-create the strategies for this emerging effort. When the pandemic curbed people’s ability to meet in-person, we shifted convenings and even programming to virtual environments. While effective on some fronts, in hindsight we think the effort overall would have been strengthened by using multiple modes of communicating with key partners of all types from the start of the effort to make sure they were all aware of all aspects of the work. As we plan for the future phase of this effort, we envision a combination of communication channels—such as newsletters, video messages, and hybrid celebrations—being employed to keep partners connected and engaged.
- **Systems change is hard and slow, and we should seek multiple paths to the change we seek.** Knowing that systems change is difficult work that takes sustained effort over long periods of time, we see a need to broaden our approach to encompass even more pathways to change. Looking forward, we hope to explore expanding the effort beyond a focus on Pittsburg. By including other communities in the East County, we will expand the potential base of powerful partners engaged in the work, and the possible windows of opportunity to make systemic change.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

First 5 Contra Costa is committed to this systems change work and looks forward to strengthening this effort by engaging new partners and testing new strategies based on the lessons learned from the last five years.

We invite you to join us in this journey to ensure families, schools and communities are ready to support the success of our African American and Black children. We are working to disrupt historic trends and build a better future.

For more information about our current efforts, visit the [Ready Kids East County](https://www.first5coco.org) page on our website at [first5coco.org](https://www.first5coco.org).

■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to all at the Dean and Margaret Leshar Foundation for partnering with us on this bold effort and believing in the power of our families, schools and communities working together to support African American and Black children in one of the areas of highest need in our county.

First 5 Contra Costa would also like to thank all of the individuals, organizations, coalitions, and partners who contributed to our collective learning, inquiry, successes and challenges. From the many parents and caregivers who shared their hopes, struggles and frustrations, to the service providers who leaned in with us on this journey, to the community leaders who engaged with us—we thank you all for your time, dedication, and contributions to making East County more ready for African American and Black children.

Organization/Agency/Company Name or Role	Name	Title
Antioch Unified School District	Phelicia Lang	Educator
Aspiranet	Tyrell Burks	Father Engagement Specialist
Aspiranet	DeeAnna Granata	Center Director, Antioch First 5 Center*
Aspiranet	Marika Hinds	Center Director, East County First 5 Center*
Aspiranet	Shalila Melvin	Community Resource Specialist/Core Program Supervisor I*
Aspiranet	Mark Tiano	Division Director*
Aspiranet	Laurie Walsh	Chief Operating Officer
Black Women in Early Childhood Collective	La Krishna Dillard	Director, Consultant
Black Women in Early Childhood Collective	Nini Humphrey	Member, Consultant
Black Women in Early Childhood Collective	Crystal McClendon-Gourdine	Director, Consultant
City Official/Politician	Holland Barrett White	Mayor of Pittsburg*
City Official/Politician	Shanelle Scales-Preston	Pittsburg City Councilmember
Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.)	Cathy Botello	Executive Director/Founder*
Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.)	Natasha Paddock	Executive Director
Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.)	Nain Villanueva de Lopez	Parent Education Manager*
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors	Federal Glover	County Supervisor
Contra Costa County Library	Bella Merrill	Librarian II - Early Literacy Outreach Librarian at Contra Costa County Library
Contra Costa County Library	Amy Mockoski	Librarian III - Youth Services
Dean & Margaret Leshar Foundation	Devorah Levine	Executive Director
Eileen Pippins Consulting	Eileen Pippins	Consultant
First Baptist Head Start	Antoinette Edwards	Manager, Disabilities, Mental Health*
Innovation Bridge	Brit Irby	Associate Director
Innovation Bridge	bel Reyes	Executive Director
Lift Up Contra Costa	Taylor Sims	Projects Manager*
Lincoln Families	DeeAnna Granata	Center Director, East County First 5 Center
Lincoln Families	Chris Nguon	Associate Director of Community-Based Grant Funded Programs
Lincoln Families	LeVictoria Thomas	East County First 5 Center Community Resource Specialist
NAACP	Willie Mims	Educational Chair
Parent	Jenay Clayton	
Parent	Ousha Reed	
Parent Voices/CoKids	Candy Duperroir	Parent Voices Coordinator, Contra Costa Chapter
Pittsburg United Methodist Church	Quentisha Davis	Pastor
Pittsburg Unified School District	Eileen Chen	Executive Director, Educational Services*
Pittsburg Unified School District	Kelly Mercado	Supervisor of Early Childhood Education
Pittsburg Unified School District	Leticia Preciado	District Parent & Family Coordinator
Pittsburg Unified School District	Janet Schulze	Superintendent
Pittsburg Unified School District	Shelley Velasco	Coordinator, Elementary Instruction
Pittsburg Unified School District School Board	DeShawn Woolridge	Member
Souljahs	Gregory Osorio	Co-founder, Community Leader
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Kelsey Gottschalk	Director of Programs*
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Maya Gutierrez	Director of Programs
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Savitha Moorthy	Executive Director
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Laura Rodriguez	Contra Costa Program Supervisor*
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Nain Villanueva de Lopez	Contra Costa Program Supervisor
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Kaitlin Young	Contra Costa Program Supervisor*
YesToECE	Shawn Bryant	Principal Early Childhood Education Consultant/Coach

*no longer with that organization/in that role

■ CONTRIBUTIONS

Writing by: Jessica Keener and Sandra Naughton

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Layout by: Brian Kelley

■ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ready or Not, Here We Come!

<https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/kindergarten-readiness-assessment/>



first5coco.org



		FY2023-24 Approved Budget				FY2024-25 Proposed Budget			
REVENUE ¹		F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Revenue	% of Budget	F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Revenue	% of Budget
1	State Sales Tax	6,802,699		6,802,699		6,609,880		6,609,880	
2	Federal Grants		150,000	150,000			100,000	100,000	
3	State Grants		1,031,221	1,031,221			1,137,250	1,137,250	
4	Subrecipient Awards		1,010,323	1,010,323			1,229,906	1,229,906	
5	Philanthropic Grants		405,000	405,000			100,000	100,000	
6	Other Revenue		250,000	250,000		200,000	-	200,000	
7	TOTAL REVENUE	6,802,699	2,846,544	9,649,243		6,809,880	2,567,156	9,377,036	
8	<i>Prop 10/56 Fund Balance Drawdown</i>		-	4,870,175			-	3,023,281	
9	TOTAL REVENUE	6,802,699	2,846,544	14,519,418		6,809,880	2,567,156	12,400,317	
PROGRAMMATIC FOCUS AREAS EXPENSES		F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Budget	F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Budget
12	Early Childhood Education								
13	Workforce Development	390,960	8,800	399,760		45,000	100,000	145,000	
14	Quality Early Learning		487,032	487,032		9,000	536,059	545,059	
15	Ready Kids East County School Readiness Initiative		189,264	189,264		160,743	-	160,743	
16	Total	390,960	685,096	1,076,056	7%	214,743	636,059	850,802	7%
17	Strengthening Families [formerly Family Support]								
18	First 5 Centers	3,567,529		3,567,529		3,337,364		3,337,364	
19	Home Visiting System Coordination		214,924	214,924			64,865	64,865	
20	Total	3,567,529	214,924	3,782,453	26%	3,337,364	64,865	3,402,229	27%
21	Early Intervention								
22	Early Childhood Mental Health Services	230,588		230,588		15,000	192,000	207,000	
23	Triple P Positive Parenting	92,023	102,632	194,655		92,023	92,023	184,046	
24	Inclusive Early Care & Education Environments [formerly Support for Children w/ Disabilities]	200,000	405,000	605,000		166,000	604,689	770,689	
25	Coordinated Systems of Care								
26	Help Me Grow Services & Developmental Playgroups	408,947		408,947		424,947		424,947	
27	Trauma-Informed Systems [formerly Contra Costa Network of Care Hub]	20,000		20,000		11,700		11,700	
28	Total	951,558	507,632	1,459,190	10%	709,670	888,712	1,598,382	13%
29	Policy Advocacy & Communications Strategies								
30	Community Engagement	119,137	75,000	194,137				0	
31	Communications Strategy & Policy Advocacy	343,348	33,960	377,308		290,200	15,332	305,532	
32	Total	462,485	108,960	571,445	4%	290,200	15,332	305,532	2%
33	Program Salaries/Benefits and Overhead Expenses								
34	Program Salaries & Wages	2,707,908		2,707,908		1,470,128	536,227	2,006,355	
35	Program Employee Benefits	1,601,528		1,601,528		864,341	332,176	1,196,517	
36	Program Expenses and Overhead	417,533		417,533		410,623		410,623	
37	Total	4,726,969		4,726,969		2,745,092	868,403	3,613,495	
38	TOTAL PROGRAM INITIATIVES EXPENSES	10,099,501	1,516,612	11,616,113	80.0%	7,297,069	2,473,371	9,770,440	78.8%
39									
EVALUATION EXPENSES		F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Budget	F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Budget
40	Evaluation Salaries & Wages	254,055		254,055		316,535	16,840	333,375	
41	Evaluation Employee Benefits	141,699		141,699		167,467	8,134	175,601	
42	Professional Services	363,400	25,000	388,400		208,250	2,500	210,750	
43	Purchased Services and Supplies	42,500	2,000	44,500		20,500	-	20,500	
44	Evaluation Expenses and Overhead	46,423		46,423		71,920	-	71,920	
45	TOTAL EVALUATION	848,077	27,000	875,077	6.0%	784,672	27,474	812,146	6.5%
46									
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES		F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Budget	F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Budget
47	Administrative Salaries & Wages	777,420		777,420		749,315		749,315	
48	Administrative Employee Benefits	422,046		422,046		413,661		413,661	
49	Professional Services	462,500		462,500		237,000		237,000	
50	Purchased Services and Supplies	159,600		159,600		180,800		180,800	
51	Operating Overhead (Risk Mgmt., DoIT/EHSD, etc.)	206,662		206,662		236,955		236,955	
52	TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	2,028,228	-	2,028,228	14.0%	1,817,731	0	1,817,731	14.7%
53									
54	GRAND TOTAL	12,975,806	1,543,612	14,519,418		9,899,472	2,500,845	12,400,317	

Notes:

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*FY23-24 Adopted Budget included for context, prior year revenue/expenditure.

¹ Revenue sources are detailed in 'FY24-25 Revenue Projection Summary'.

² State Sales Tax revenue includes Prop 10, Prop 56, CECET, and SMIF Interest accrued while in State interest earning accounts prior to distribution to counties. Allocation assumes 10% decline over FY22/23 Year-End actuals.

³ Interest earnings are percent of County's pooled investments (fluctuations based on investment returns).

⁴ Name has been changed to align with Strategic Plan 2023-2026 Programmatic Focus Areas.

⁵ Sub-titles to program areas have been modified to reflect programmatic changes and related funding streams.

⁶ Coordinated System of Care includes comprehensive intervention services, developmental playgroups, screenings, and provider supports. It also includes navigation and referral services through HMG and Trauma-Informed supports and activities such as the CCC Network of Care.

⁷ Activities in this category align with new organizational Policy, Strategy & Evaluation structure. It includes advocacy trainings and activities, advocacy mini-grants, FESP, support for Children's Leadership Council (CLC) activities, and Communication Strategies.

Percent of Total Expenses	
FY 2023-24	
Program Initiatives	80.0%
Evaluation	6.0%
Administration	14.0%
Total:	100.0%

Percent of Total Expenses	
FY 2024-25	
Program Initiatives	78.8%
Evaluation	6.5%
Administration	14.7%
Total:	100.0%

FY2024-25 Revenue Projection Summary



REVENUE		FY2024-25 Projected Budget			
		F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Revenue	Totals
1	State Sales Tax				6,609,880
2	Proposition 10 - Cigarette Sales Tax Apportionment	4,752,140		4,752,140	
3	Proposition 56 - backfill funding for loss of Prop 10 funding	1,732,740		1,732,740	
4	CECET - California Electronic Cigarette Excise Tax	100,000		100,000	
5	SMIF - Surplus Money Investment Fund	25,000		25,000	
6	Federal Grants			-	100,000
7	Early Childhood Workforce Compensation Project		100,000	100,000	
8	State Grants			-	1,137,250
9	First 5 California IMPACT Legacy Grant		689,460	689,460	
10	First 5 IMPACT Legacy HUB		60,048	60,048	
11	First 5 CA Home Visiting Tech. Assistance & Coordination Grant		127,742	127,742	
12	Childen & Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI)		260,000	260,000	
13	Subrecipient Awards			-	1,229,906
14	CA State Preschool Quality Block Grant (CSPP)		251,119	251,119	
15	Quality Counts California (QCC)		205,870	205,870	
16	Workforce Pathways (CCCoE)		10,000	10,000	
17	MHSA-Behavioral Health Agreement (Triple P)		92,917	92,917	
18	Measure X-- Children w/Disabilities		670,000	670,000	
19	Other Public Funds			-	
20	Philanthropic Grants			-	100,000
21	Sunlight Giving		100,000	100,000	
22	Other Revenue			-	200,000
23	Interest Income	200,000		200,000	
24	Other Misc. Income			-	
TOTAL PROJECTED FY24-25 REVENUE		6,609,880	2,567,156	9,377,036	9,377,036



Staff Report
April 8, 2024 Commission Meeting

ACTION: X
DISCUSSION:

TITLE: FY2024-25 Proposed Budget, First 5 Contra Costa

Recommendation

Commission approval of the FY2024-25 Proposed Budget, First 5 Contra Costa.

Background

The FY2024-25 Proposed Budget maintains alignment with the long-term fiscal strategies including:

- leveraging Proposition 10, Proposition 56, and CECET cigarette and tobacco tax revenues as match for private sector partnerships and philanthropic grants;
- establishing partnerships with County agencies through subrecipient grants to jointly provide essential services; and
- securing public and philanthropic grants to further enhance First 5 activities focused in support of young children and their families.

Fiscal Impact

The FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget maintains focus on continuity of the Strategic Plan’s Focus Areas with some programmatic changes, and assures intentionality in forecasting anticipated revenues and expenditures, and will require a drawdown from the Fund Balance in the amount of approximately \$3M.

Major Revenue

Proposition 10/Proposition 56/CECET/Surplus Money Investment Fund (SMIF) Revenue

State tax apportionments are the principal revenue source for First 5 and includes Proposition 10 cigarette tax, Proposition 56 tobacco products tax (backfill funding for loss of Prop 10 funding), CECET e-cigarette tax, and SMIF, apportioned interest associated with Prop 56 receipts held in State interest earning account.

- **Proposition 10**
A report prepared by Capitol Matrix Consulting (December 6, 2022), on behalf of the First 5 Association indicated a decline of up to approximately 15% in Proposition 10, 56, and SMIF revenue projections, as a result of Prop 31. FY2024-25 is the year when the impact to revenue is anticipated to level off. Estimates from First 5 CA average an annual decline in tax revenue of approximately 3.6% for FY 2024-25 through FY 2026-27, which includes a decline of approximately 7% in FY2024-25. ***In light of this information, the FY2024-25 Proposed Budget represents a fiscally conservative approach to projecting Prop 10 revenue (\$4,752,140), a projected decrease of 10% over FY2022-23 Year End Actuals.***
- **Proposition 56**
While revenue for Prop 56 backfill had experienced a 12% decline from \$2,046,138 in FY2021-22 to \$1,792,476 in FY2022-23, in FY2023-24 Prop 56 revenue took a surprising upturn and came in

at approximately \$1,925,267 (or 20% above initially projected, \$1,613,229) due to changes in consumption¹. ***Due to this positive trend, the FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget includes projected Prop 56 revenue of \$1,732,740 (which still factors in a 10% decline, as a conservative estimate until a more predictable behavior pattern is supported with data in the upcoming years).***

- CECET

On November 8, 2022, Senate Bill 395 was approved, enacting the Healthy Outcomes and Prevention Education (HOPE) Act, which imposes the California Electronic Cigarette Excise Tax (CECET). CECET went into effect July 1, 2022, and requires retailers of electronic cigarettes to collect from the purchaser, at the time of sale, a tax of 12.5% of the retail selling price of electronic cigarettes either containing or sold with nicotine. The collection of the CECET is in addition to the sales and use tax². ***The projected FY 2024-25 CECET revenue is \$100,000 based on FY2022-23 actuals.***

- Surplus Money Investment Fund (SMIF)

SMIF is the interest accrued from statewide Prop 56 receipts held in State interest earning accounts. Counties receive a share of SMIF interest earned based on the Proposition 10/56 apportionment methodology at fiscal year-end. Thus, it is difficult to project FY2023-24 actuals. ***The FY2024-25 Proposed Budget includes \$25,000 in projected SMIF revenue, based on FY2022-23 actuals.***

- Other Revenue Impacts-- Proposition 31

In November 2022, voters approved Proposition 31—Prohibition on Sale of Certain Tobacco Products (aka, the ‘Flavor Ban’) banning the sale of flavored tobacco products and flavor enhancers, with some exceptions. FY23-24 is the first full year of steep revenue declines resulting from the flavor ban. After which, following fiscal years would experience a leveling off, or more stabilizing revenue stream.

Federal Grants

Earlier this calendar year, First 5 Contra Costa was awarded a grant from the Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The grant was awarded for the implementation of the “Growing and Retaining Vibrant Homegrown Early Childhood Workforce Project” that intends to gather child care provider input on a childcare workforce compensation assessment and develop a proposed Guaranteed Income pilot for child care providers in our County. The project was submitted by Congressman DeSaulnier on behalf of First 5 Contra Costa as a Congressionally Directed Community Project. The funding award is in the amount of \$150,000. ***The budgeted ACF revenue for FY2024-25 is \$100,000.***

State Grants

The FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget includes multiple State grants from First 5 California and other California State Departments including the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS):

- First 5 California IMPACT Legacy Grant: First 5 Contra Costa received a two-year IMPACT Grant in the amount of \$1.3M last fall to support children prenatal through age 5 and their families through building statewide quality improvement systems focused on early learning and care experiences. In addition, and associated with this award, is a *First 5 IMPACT Legacy HUB* grant which will primarily be used for a technical database called HUBBE used to track data for child care providers. ***The budgeted revenue for the First 5 CA IMPACT Legacy grant for FY2024-***

¹ Memorandum—Prop. 10 and Prop. 56 Backfill Determinations, From: Gention Droboniku, Manager Research and Statistics Section, To: Nick Maduros, Director of CA Dept. of Tax and Fee Administration—Financial Operations Bureau, Dec. 14, 2023).

² Tax Guide for California Electronic Cigarette Excise Tax, www.cdtfa.ca.gov/, page 1.

25 is \$689,460 and the projected revenue for the First 5 IMPACT Legacy HUB grant for FY2024-25 is \$60,048.

- First 5 California Regional Home Visiting Technical Assistance and Coordination Grant: First 5 Contra Costa received a two-year grant as part of Bay Area Region 4 regional application in the amount of \$198,256. The purpose of the grant is to promote increased coordination and collaboration to help counties create a sustainable, unified system that supports families with home visiting they need and maximize available funding to serve more families. In addition, at a local level, to host meetings and trainings for Contra Costa County's home visitors and home visiting program leaders to enhance their effectiveness in meeting family needs. **The budgeted revenue for the Regional HV TA & Coordination grant for FY2024-25 is \$127,742.**
- Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI)—First 5 has received a two-year grant in the amount of \$400,000 from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) for the Evidenced-Based Practices and Community-Defined Evidence Practices Grant Program Round 1 of the CYBHI. **The purpose of the grant is to scale Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) – the budgeted amount for FY2024-25 is \$260,000.**

Subrecipient Awards

The FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget includes a focus on establishing partnerships with County agencies through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements that leverage Prop 10 funds with other public and private funding sources. Funding received by First 5 Contra Costa from other County agencies are categorized as 'Subrecipient Awards' to jointly provide the following essential services:

- First 5 will continue to partner with Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools to support activities for the California State Preschool (CSPP) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) project in Contra Costa County. The FY 2024-25 funding for CSPP/QRIS will be known later in the summer. **The proposed CSPP revenue includes an estimate of \$ 251,119 that reflects the current FY award amount. These funds leverage First 5 IMPACT funding.**
- First 5 and Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools will continue to partner to provide services for the Quality Counts California (QCC) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) project in Contra Costa County. The FY 2024-25 funding for QCC/QRIS will be known later in the summer. **The proposed QCC revenue includes an estimate of \$205,870 that reflects the current FY award amount. These funds leverage First 5 IMPACT funding.**
- First 5 will partner with Contra Costa Behavioral Health (BH) to jointly sponsor Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) services to the 0–5-year-old population in Contra Costa County by blending MHSA funding and Prop 10 funding. **The projected MHSA FY 2024-25 funding for Triple P is \$92,917 and the First 5 proposed budget includes the associated revenue and expenditures.**
- First 5 will continue to partner with Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools to support activities related to furthering the training and attainment of college credits for early care and education service providers using a state-level Workforce Pathways Grant. The FY 2024-2025 Workforce Pathways Grant revenue will be known later in the summer. **The proposed budget includes a projected revenue for FY2024-25 in the amount of \$10,000.**
- Measure X Children with Disabilities Project. First 5 has been awarded Measure X funding in the amount of \$810,000 to be utilized through a two-year contract with the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) starting with the year the agreement was signed, FY2023-24. Due to delays in contracting, unexpended funds allotted in FY2023-24 will be utilized to fund a more well-

developed plan in FY2024-25. Measure X funding will leverage Prop 10 funds to expand services and supports that will build capacity of early care and education providers by increasing their knowledge, skills, and resources to better include children with disabilities. This funding stream is anticipated to continue indefinitely until further notice. **The budgeted Measure X revenue for FY2024-25 is \$670,000.**

Philanthropic Grants

First 5 Contra Costa continues to identify funding opportunities with public sector and philanthropic organizations in furtherance of long-term fiscal sustainability strategies. The FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget includes a grant award from a philanthropic foundation in support of ongoing First 5 activities while most of the past philanthropic grants have sunset.

- Sunlight Giving Foundation Grant: While the final year of three was FY 2023-24, of a general purpose \$100,000 grant award in support of First 5 Contra Costa activities and services, the funds are typically disbursed and received in the subsequent fiscal year, thus this revenue is reflected in FY 2024-25.

Other Revenue – Interest Income

- Other revenue includes First 5's share of interest accrued from Countywide pooled investments, which includes First 5 funds in reserve accounts, which are managed by the Contra Costa County Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office. **The FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget includes a projection of \$200,000, which is a conservative estimate based on past year's interest income earnings attributable to the County's investment strategy coupled with a rise in interest rates on more stable investments.**

Highlights of Programmatic Focus Areas

The proposed budget expenses for FY2024-25 of \$9,770,440 for organizational and programmatic focus areas budget categories are in alignment with the goals and priorities outlined in the FY 2023-26 Strategic Plan. Program expenses support programs, services and resources in three focus areas - Early Childhood Education (\$850,802), Early Intervention (\$1,598,382), and Strengthening Families (\$3,402,229). The Policy Advocacy and Communications Strategy (\$305,532) budget category also includes activities connected to First 5 Contra Costa's four core strategies in the— capacity building, research, resource connection, and advocacy and community engagement. Revisions to the naming of programmatic budget categories may be necessary as staff continue update and align budget categories to the Commission's Strategic Plan adopted terminology. The Family Support Program Area changed to Strengthening Families in the current Plan.

Evaluation

The Evaluation FY2024-25 proposed budget expenses of \$812,146 accounts for 6.5% of the overall costs of the total FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget.

Wages and Benefits

The FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget for wages and benefits totals \$4,874,824, which is a decrease of \$1.0M from the prior FY 2023-24 adopted budget. This is primarily a result of a strategic approach to reassessing existing vacancies and re-hiring needs resulting in the elimination of 7 vacant positions for a total of 27 FTEs. The proposed wages and benefits include:

- Step increases for relevant staff in alignment with the new Commission adopted Salary Schedule that resulted from a recently completed Compensation and Classification Study of all job classifications. The newly adopted Salary Schedule led to an increase in wages for a majority of staff.

- Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) increase of 3% for staff based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 'Consumer Price Index (CPI)-- San Francisco Bay Area (March 2024), reflecting an adjusted CPI of 2.4% for the last 12 months. Additionally, a COLA survey of Bay Area First 5 Commissions was conducted to support this decision.
- The FY 2024-25 cost associated with the COLA is \$121,740 and the funding associated with the COLA is included in the proposed budget. The COLA would be effective July 1, 2024.

Administrative and Operating Overhead

The FY 2024-25 Proposed Administrative and Operating Overhead Budget is \$1,817,731 which reflects a decrease of approximately \$100,000 in overall Administrative costs. Administrative and Operating Overhead costs account for: ***Purchased Services & Supplies (\$180,800)*** which includes organization-wide equipment leases, offices supplies, and costs associated with improvements in technology for more efficient work tools for all staff; ***Professional Services (\$237,000)*** which includes County Counsel, Audit costs, and other financial and administrative consulting services; ***and Operating Overhead costs (\$236,955)*** which include costs for County Risk Management, County DoIT/EHSD, rent, maintenance & repair, etc. *The FY 2024-25 planned Administrative and Operating Overhead is under the 15% cap per Commission guidelines.*

Consequence of Negative Action

Should the First 5 Contra Costa Commission elect not to accept the budget report, it would result in an audit finding of non-compliance with the established Commission Bylaws – *Article II, section (g)*.

Attachment

FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget



**Staff Report
April 8, 2024**

ACTION: X
DISCUSSION:

TITLE: Public Hearing on the First 5 California 2022-23 Annual Report

Introduction:

First 5 California prepares an annual report each year, based in part on fiscal, program and participant information provided by each of the 58 county commissions.

Each County First 5 Commission is required by statute to hold an annual public hearing on First 5 California's annual report.

The report may be found online here:

https://www.cafc.ca.gov/pdf/about/budget_perf/annual_report_pdfs/F5CA_2022-23_Annual%20Report_ADA.pdf

A short summary of Contra Costa program highlights appears on page 33.

Recommendation:

Accept the First 5 California Annual Report 2022-23

Contra Costa

We aim to change systems of services and supports to better meet the needs of children and families through a whole-child, whole-family approach.

- **Strengthening Families:** In FY 2023, we served 5,166 adults and children through programming at our First 5 Centers—a 71% increase from the previous year. As families face economic challenges, we distributed 1,425 cases of diapers and 149 car seats. Our Community Advisory Councils, composed of 22 First 5 Center parents/volunteers, completed a community needs assessment using the 5 Protective Factors framework and presented recommendations to better address community needs—the Centers will implement them in FY 2024.
- **Early Childhood Education:** In our Ready Kids East County initiative—an effort to reform the systems and services available to African American and Black families—we held seven family engagement workshops and four parent/child meetups with 75 community members to build connections and foster school readiness. Based on a needs and interest survey for providers, 240 early learning providers were offered 23 professional development opportunities. Our Quality Matters Family Child Care (FCC) Partner Program involved 17 FCC providers to serve as mentors to 39 FCC providers. Mentors offered peer-to-peer support for quality improvement and strengthened connections between FCCs—an effort to support quality early learning and foster retention.
- **Early Intervention:** With increased outreach to participate in the Help Me Grow (HMG) model, 185 more children were screened for developmental concerns compared to last year. To increase screening in early learning spaces, we launched an Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ) screening pilot with a school district serving high-needs communities. Our 2022 pilot program that linked our HMG model to health clinics trained to conduct adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) screening was featured in several publications. Aliados Health showcased it in its Promising Practice papers and podcast. We also published a brief and practice paper to share the successes and lessons learned.

Del Norte

First 5 Del Norte (F5DN) expanded our reach of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library throughout the year with registration forms handed out to every preschool class, kindergarten class, child care provider, community baby shower participant, partner program participant in programs like Toddler Time and Happy Toes, and new parent kit registration in the county. Enrollment continues to increase, and feedback from families has been positive. In 2022–2023, F5DN continued providing and developing culturally appropriate content of the parent-support texting program Ready4K. Working with ParentPowered, we are adapting their existing texting program, Ready4K, to provide connections to local programs and resources, encourage community connections, and educate families on school readiness skill building. F5DN has also taken a leading roll in the oral health education and outreach in Del Norte County, with educational outreach at health fairs and youth and family fairs, and is working to help ensure that the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessments happen in our county. Additionally, we have spent the past year laying the foundation with our community partners to begin a Health Families America home visiting program in Del Norte County. We are unique in that we are partnering with nurses to provide an elevated level of medical supports to the families who need additional supports, and F5DN will provide the social support side of the home visits. We continue to work with our collaborating partners on our 3Read23 literacy initiative, working to support our educators and child care providers to provide high level literacy and community supports to our families. We also partnered with Open Door Community Health around ACEs awareness, which we incorporated into our Healthy Families America model.



First 5 Contra Costa, Children's Leadership Council

Recommended Advocacy Strategies in FY 25

Advocacy & Stakeholder Engagement Work Group

April 8, 2024 Commission Meeting



Agenda

1. Work Group Objectives
2. Advocacy-related Efforts We Lead
3. Advocacy Efforts in Our County
4. Recommendations for FY 25

Work Group Objectives

- Develop recommended strategies for the agency to:
 - “Create and identify avenues for parents/caregivers and service providers to understand their power and ability and opportunities to be advocates for policy and systems change in our three focus areas”
- To inform these recommendations, the work group will:
 - Identify lessons learned and best practices from our two decades of staffing various advocacy-related efforts
 - Conduct a landscape analysis of advocacy efforts in our county that include our three focus areas
- Members include Jessica, Liliana, Carolina, Randee, Sarah, Sandra & Ruth
- Began working on objectives in August 2023

Focus on Policy Advocacy

- Defined as “efforts to change regulations, legislation/law, or public funding levels at either the county, state, or federal levels”
- Not focusing on ability to advocate for one’s self, one’s child or one’s family
- Not focusing on stakeholder engagement

The Advocacy Continuum Overview



Advocacy-related Efforts We Lead

- Parent-focused:
 - Regional Groups*
 - First 5 Centers' Community Advisory Councils (CAC)

- Provider-focused:
 - Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP)
 - Early Learning Leadership Group (ELLG)
 - Early Childhood Prevention & Intervention Coalition (ECPIC)

*Programming put on hold in August 2023

Regional Groups

Three Regional Groups with approximately 50 to 70 parents/community members per group that advocated for policy changes in the community. Participants learned advocacy skills, leadership, and about their communities. The four areas of focus were: Housing, Parks and Land Use, Equitable Representation, and Racial and Immigrant Justice.

Accomplishments

- In partnership with other entities, campaigns led to policy changes at the local level for tenants and immigrant rights, improving ADA accessibility and family-friendliness of parks, among others.
- Available to anyone interested in participating; many participants for several years.

Challenges

- Areas of focus were not aligned with First 5 Contra Costa's three focus areas
- Many participants did not have children ages 0-5.

Community Advisory Councils (CAC)

Each First 5 Center has a CAC with up to 9 parents or community members. Participants learn skills as they work together to assess how the First 5 Centers are doing in serving their local community and make recommendations for enhancing the centers' activities and role in the community.

Accomplishments

- Historically, participants have reported an increase in confidence levels, leadership skills, advocacy skills
- Many recommendations have been implemented by First 5 Center staff.

Challenge

- Not designed to engage in policy advocacy work beyond the sphere of the center.

FESP – Family Economic Security Partnership

FESP is a public, private, and nonprofit collaboration dedicated to increasing the income and building the assets of low-income families in Contra Costa County; also working to increase awareness of the importance of policy and advocacy needed to end poverty.

Accomplishments

- Successful campaigns like the *Earn It, Keep It, Save It*, increasing participation in the 2020 Census, and other efforts.
- Broad membership of service providers, systems partners, and advocates

Challenge

- Not a specific focus on the ages 0-5 population

ELLG – Early Learning Leadership Group

ELLG is a county-wide group that aims to increase collaboration, share data, identify gaps, improve service delivery, and advocate for policies at the local, state, and federal levels so that the early care and education system meets the needs of all children and their families. The group has identified four primary advocacy issue areas: Quality Childcare, Workforce Development, Access and Affordability, and a Coordinated and Sustainable System.

Accomplishments

- Successfully co-sponsored a state bill and helped advocate for childcare slots and provider stipends during the pandemic.
- Successfully advocated for Measure X allocation for early childhood education.

Challenge

- Only focused on issues related to early childhood education.

ECPIC – Early Childhood Prevention & Intervention Coalition

ECPIC is a county-wide and multi-disciplinary collaborative that aims to advocate for the prioritization of the social emotional needs of young children (prenatal-6 years old) in state and county systems.

Accomplishments

- Collaborated with member CBOs to leverage Mental Health Services Act funding for programs like Every Day Moments.

Challenge

- Only focused on issues related to social emotional needs of young children.

Advocacy Efforts in Contra Costa County

- Identified external entities engaging parents & service providers in advocacy related to our three focus areas:
 - Early childhood education
 - Early intervention
 - Strengthening Families
- Interviewed 22 groups and asked for referrals to others doing similar work
- 12 groups engaging parents/caregivers
- 13 groups engaging service providers



DIRECTORY OF
**ADVOCACY EFFORTS IN
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY**
RELATED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD ISSUES

JANUARY 2024

COMPILED BY FIRST 5 CONTRA COSTA



Recommendations for Next Fiscal Year

Advocacy-related Efforts We Lead

1) Not continue Regional Groups and capture and share lessons learned over 20 years

- *Rationale:* Regional Groups in their latest iteration were not aligned with First 5 Contra Costa's focus areas; resource-intensive; existing membership opted to join another entity; multiple groups offering opportunities for parents to engage in advocacy
- *Implementation proposal:*
 - Remove Regional Groups as an active program in our FY 25 budget
 - In Spring 2024, release a summative report on learnings from the last 25 years

Our Recommendations for Next Fiscal Year

Advocacy-related Efforts We Lead

2) Create a First 5 Contra Costa Parent Advisory Board by tapping into Community Advisory Council (CAC) and offering their members an opportunity to have impact beyond their immediate community.

- *Rationale:* First 5 CACs do not focus on policy advocacy, but we'd like to pilot a way to leverage them to enhance family voice for our agency.
- *Implementation proposal:*
 - Create a First 5 Contra Costa Parent Advisory Board in FY 25 by recruiting two CAC members from each of the First 5 Centers
 - Parent Advisory Board would meet twice a year to provide input on: programming, countywide needs for early childhood, equity work, and supporting policy advocacy.

Our Recommendations for Next Fiscal Year

Advocacy-related Efforts We Lead

3) Explore changes to the role and structure of ELLG & ECPIIC, and FESP

- *Rationale:* First 5 Contra Costa staffs these three separate groups. Explore ways to better coordinate, connect and align each groups' efforts for increased impact.
- *Implementation proposal:*
 - Dedicate staff time in FY 25 to exploring the possibilities, benefits and challenges of creating new ways for these three efforts to collaborate and/or align to enhance the impact on policy advocacy related to early childhood issues.

Analysis of Advocacy Efforts in Our County

- Many opportunities already exist for advocacy related to our three focus areas, and other opportunities exist for efforts beyond our focus areas.
- Several entities interviewed only engage in information sharing but are interested in doing more.
- Several entities interviewed expressed a need for more support to reach their vision.



Recommendations for Next Fiscal Year

Advocacy Efforts in Our County

- 1) Pilot new supports for advocacy capacity building aligned with our focus areas
 - A) Offer an advocacy training for multiple groups to participate in that focuses on:
 - advocacy skill building
 - telling stories
 - county and state level legislative and budget processes
 - ***Implementation proposal:***
 - Hire a contractor to provide advocacy training to existing coalitions who focus on Early Childhood Education, Early Intervention, and Strengthening Families.
 - Advocacy training could be one-day with follow-up video meetings and presentations by First 5 Contra Costa staff

Our Recommendations for Next Fiscal Year

Advocacy Efforts in Our County

- 1) Pilot new supports for advocacy capacity building aligned with our focus areas
 - B) Explore developing competitive mini grant program that supports capacity building opportunities for parents and/or service providers related to our focus areas
 - ***Implementation proposal:***
 - Pilot a mini-grant program in late FY 25 of up to \$4,000 per organization for 5 organizations to support parents and service providers to attend educational opportunities or trainings related to policy advocacy connected to our three focus areas. *Ineligible uses of funds: staff time, lobbying, food and drink, etc.*

Questions?



first5coco.org

February 9, 2024

Department of Health Care Services
Director's Office
Attn: Lindy Harrington and René Mollow
P.O. Box 997413, MS 0000
Sacramento, California 95899-7413

RE: CalAIM Section 1115 Continuous Coverage for Children Application

Dear Lindy Harrington and René Mollow,

Executive Directors of the First 5 Bay Area Counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma strongly and enthusiastically support the **State's amendment to the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) Section 1115 demonstration to provide continuous coverage in the Medi-Cal program and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for eligible children until their fifth birthday.**

First 5's are committed to ensuring the optimal health and well-being of all children, achieving equity in health outcomes, and advocating for broader racial and economic justice. We know that enrollees of color are more likely to experience disruptions in their insurance coverage, thus the proposed amendment is a powerful health equity strategy, securing sustained and reliable access to health services and treatment for our youngest children throughout the Bay Area and the state.

Moreover, pediatric visits serve as a universal gateway to comprehensive preventative care where families can connect with coordinated supports such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, applied behavior analysis, and mental health services. Now through CalAIM, Medi-Cal families also have access to community supports like asthma mediation and housing navigation. Continuous access to full-coverage Medi-Cal is critical for the health and development of children, especially those in families experiencing volatility in employment, income, and housing.

Ensuring timely implementation of continuous enrollment is more important now than ever. California is conducting Medi-Cal redeterminations, and children are once again facing gaps in coverage. From July to November 2023, almost 250,000 California children have already lost their Medi-Cal coverage, most often due to procedural reasons, as part of the unwinding of federal Medicaid continuous coverage protection. The State's proposed amendment to allow continuous coverage for children through their fifth birthday will help reduce churn and gaps in Medi-Cal and CHIP coverage for young children. Children should not lose coverage during their

first five years of life because of administrative and systemic barriers that disproportionately affect families of color.

Additionally, we would like to offer the following comments on the proposed amendment to the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) Section 1115 demonstration related to continuous coverage for children.

1. **The waiver amendment request should explicitly state that it eliminates the need for annual renewal.** This waiver amendment request will advance the objective of making the Medi-Cal program work better for families by removing procedural hurdles that impact continued enrollment. While likely intended, it is worth explicitly clarifying in the waiver amendment request that the proposed continuous coverage protection eliminates annual renewal forms and determinations for children before the age of five.
2. While we understand that this proposal amends an existing waiver demonstration, which is set to end in two years, **we expect DHCS will seek a new waiver or a continuing waiver beyond the two years so that it has a longer period of evaluation and opportunity to demonstrate its impact.** Although continuous enrollment will likely immediately reduce churn and gaps in coverage for children, as demonstrated during COVID-19 pandemic continuous coverage, it may take longer than two years to realize other impacts as defined in the waiver amendment, including improved access to physical and behavioral health care, and improved health outcomes for young children.
3. **For those in the process of completing their renewal forms when the policy goes into effect, their continuous coverage will take effect immediately and will not be subject to the upcoming redetermination deadline.** This clarification is aligned with the intent of the Department's waiver amendment request, but it is worth explicitly clarifying how these situations are handled at the start date.
4. **We recommend that the roll out of this policy include an outreach campaign to families** to let them know about this new protection available to their children, including who it applies to and who it does not and how that will impact their regular coverage and renewal process.

We are grateful for the State's continued leadership and support for children, families, and communities and strongly urge the Department to submit this waiver amendment request as soon as possible after the public comment period. With this waiver amendment request, California will hopefully be joining other states - like Washington and Oregon - that have already successfully obtained federal approval for their continuous coverage protection policies for young children and are implementing them.

Please reach out to any of the Bay Area First 5 Executive Directors listed below if you have further questions or if we can help with additional information.

Sincerely,

Kristin Spanos, Executive Director First 5 Alameda, kristin.spanos@first5alameda.org

Ruth Fernandez, Executive Director First 5 Contra Costa, rfernandez@first5coco.org

Maria Niggle, Executive Director First 5 Marin, maria@first5marin.org

Francine Rodd, Executive Director First 5 Monterey, francine@first5monterey.org

Lilea Duran, Executive Director First 5 Napa, lilea@first5napa.org

Lisa Faulkner, Executive Director First 5 San Benito, lisa@first5sb.org

Kitty Lopez, Executive Director First 5 San Mateo, klopez@smcgov.org

Theresa Zighera, Executive Director First 5 San Francisco, theresa.zighera@sfgov.org

David Brody, Executive Director First 5 Santa Cruz, dbrody@first5scc.org

Jennifer Cloyd, Executive Director First 5 Santa Clara, jennifer.cloyd@first5kids.org

Michele Harris, Executive Director First 5 Solano, mdharris@solanocounty.com

Angie Dillon-Shore, Executive Director First 5 Sonoma, adillonshore@first5sonomacounty.org

Assembly California Legislature



AB 2982 (Reyes): Bright Beginnings Act

SUMMARY

AB 2982 establishes a statewide Prenatal-to-Three Workgroup to craft recommendations for a 10-year comprehensive, equity-focused prenatal-to-three system policy agenda.

BACKGROUND

California has made important strides in supporting young children and their families. However, significant gaps remain, and it is critical that we comprehensively address the needs of California's infants and toddlers and their families.

Early childhood services are inequitably provided throughout the state by a patchwork of providers. Some services are Medi-Cal eligible, but with few available providers, and others are administered by counties only if resources are available. There is a need for a systemic approach that focuses on the needs of infants and toddlers, ensures access to services regardless of where children live in the state, and uplifts the strengths of all communities, cultures and languages given that 75% of our state's 0-3 population are children of color.

There is an opportunity to tailor services to communities, while ensuring equity in the services available to children across the state.

THIS BILL

AB 2982 would help California move towards more effective, universal, and equity-focused systems and services for infants and toddlers.

The bill would establish a 12-member working group to review current policies and practices at the state and local level related to infants, toddlers, and their families and craft recommendations for improvements. The working group would be responsible for reviewing and creating recommendations that focus on the following:

- 1) Early childhood systems, including the local First 5 infrastructure;
- 2) System building, including financing, data and the unique needs of children of color;
- 3) Partnership with state agencies to ensure policy and program alignment.

The workgroup shall submit its recommendations to the Administration and to the Legislature by January 31, 2026.

SUPPORT

First 5 Association of California (Sponsor)

CONTACT

Marina Espinoza, Legislative Director
Marina.espinoza@asm.ca.gov
(916) 319-2050

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ELECTIONS
NATURAL RESOURCES
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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