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First 5 California Approves Groundbreaking \$10 Million Initiative to Support Children Impacted by Immigration Enforcement

SACRAMENTO, CA – August 21, 2025 — The California Children and Families Commission, also known as First 5 California, approved a \$10 million investment to launch the Children, Families, Immigrants, and Refugees: Support and Tools (Children FIRST) initiative, a first-of-its-kind statewide effort to support children, prenatal to five years of age, being impacted by immigration policy changes and enforcement.

Children FIRST represents a step forward in ensuring children, an often invisible population in the wake of federal enforcement activities, are prioritized, protected, and supported. The initiative will create a statewide communications and resource infrastructure designed to connect, uplift, and expand existing tools, programs, and information across all 58 counties. It will also provide funding for local partners to address unique needs and respond rapidly to unforeseen challenges.

“This type of initiative focused on young children has never been done before in California, or anywhere else,” said Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, Executive Director of First 5 California. “Today’s immigration enforcement and policy changes are inflicting trauma that directly harms children’s development, physical health, and mental health. Children FIRST will amplify the trusted resources families already rely on, and will also ensure that communities in every corner of the state have access to accurate and reliable information, safe spaces, and responsive support that is intentionally designed with young children in mind. Our youngest Californians and their families deserve nothing less.”

“Children FIRST busca unir y fortalecer los esfuerzos existentes y llenar vacíos críticos,” dijo Jorge De La Cruz, Subdirector de Asuntos Externos y Gubernamentales. “Se trata de brindar a las familias de California las herramientas necesarias para apoyar a los más pequeños y responder al trauma que las políticas migratorias están causando en los niños y niñas de nuestra comunidad.”

First 5 California’s diverse executive leadership team reflects the very communities this initiative is designed to serve. Executive Director Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, a refugee from Vietnam, and Deputy Director Jorge De La Cruz, a former DACA recipient, bring lived experiences that deeply inform the agency’s commitment to protecting immigrant children and families. Their leadership underscores why Children FIRST is not only groundbreaking, but also profoundly personal to the Commission’s mission and values. Now with funding secured, First 5 California is working diligently to prepare and launch the initiative by early 2026.

About First 5 California

First 5 California was established in 1998 when voters passed Proposition 10, which taxes tobacco products to fund services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. First5 California programs and resources are designed to educate and support teachers, parents, and caregivers in the critical role they play during a child's first five years--to help California kids receive the best possible start in life and thrive. For more information, please visit www.cafc.ca.gov.