



For Immediate Release
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Governor Newsom Appoints Two New Members to California Children and Families Commission

Sacramento, Calif. — California Governor Gavin Newsom yesterday made two appointments to the California Children and Families Commission, also known as the First 5 California Commission. To serve in the role of First 5 California Commission Chair, Governor Newsom appointed Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California Surgeon General. Additionally, Governor Newsom appointed Elsa Mendoza Jimenez, Director of Health, Monterey County Health Department, as a Commission member.

Dr. Burke Harris is California's first-ever Surgeon General, and she is a nationally recognized expert in the field of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress. As Surgeon General, Dr. Burke Harris is an advisor to the governor and serves as the leading spokesperson on matters of public health and leading on solutions that tackle Californians most pressing health dilemmas. As the founder of the Center for Youth Wellness, Dr. Burke Harris is considered a national leader in advancing pediatric medicine to raise awareness and transforming societal responses to ACEs and toxic stress in young children. Dr. Burke Harris' TED Talks (TEDMED) presentation, "How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime" has amassed more than 8 million views.

"Dr. Nadine Burke Harris is an outstanding choice to lead the Commission," said George Halvorson, immediate past Chair of the First 5 California Commission. "Her professional background and experience will serve the Commission well in advancing its mission and goals of serving California's youngest children and their families. Her leadership and passion will propel the Commission in its pursuit of health and equity for Californians and she will continue to make helping young children in their earliest months and years a high priority for California and the Commission."

Dr. Burke Harris recently collaborated with First 5 California in television and radio ads promoting its award-winning *Talk. Read. Sing.*® campaign, which emphasizes the benefits of talking, reading, and singing to children from birth in order to stimulate critical brain development during the earliest months and years of their lives.

"As we continue to respond to the secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have a tremendous responsibility to California's children and families," said Dr. Nadine Burke Harris. "The First 5 California Commission's work in supporting families and children is imperative, especially in our years ahead. I am thrilled to be of service in continuing the work and promotion of science-based solutions to support the development of healthy children and families."

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New Commissioner Elsa Mendoza Jimenez oversees the Monterey County Health Department, consisting of nearly 1,000 employees who are committed to improving the communities' collective health through prevention, empowerment, and the application of HiAP, (Health in All Policies). HiAP incorporates health considerations as an investment in prevention when making policy decisions. As a current First 5 Monterey County Commissioner, her appointment to the State Commission will allow her to bring years of leadership, management, and fiscal experience in local governance and apply them to statewide issues affecting children and families, including a concerted effort to address issues of race, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

"I am honored by this appointment. I am a strong advocate for investing in early childhood initiatives focused on policies and systems change strategies to remove obstacles and provide resources so that all Californian children have an opportunity to achieve their fullest potential," said Ms. Mendoza Jimenez.

"Elsa has been instrumental in advocating for "whole family, whole child" and the Health in All Policies (HiAP) systems approach. During this time of multiple traumatic experiences in our nation and the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot think of anyone better qualified to serve Californians at this time," said Francine M. Rodd, Executive Director of First 5 Monterey County.

"To have Governor Newsom appoint two professionals who specialize in the needs of young children and their families is an honor," said Ms. Maben. "Ms. Mendoza Jimenez and Dr. Burke Harris are all-stars in their fields, and their appointments are a true benefit to Californians," added Ms. Maben.

For more information about First 5 California, visit www.cafc.ca.gov.

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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. First 5 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.