



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **First 5 California Commission Approves \$3 Million to Support Refugee Families Arriving in California**

### *Commissioners Respond to Afghan Refugee Humanitarian Need*

**Sacramento, CA** — On October 28, 2021, the First 5 California Commission unanimously approved \$3 million in initial funding to support refugee families resettling in California. The approval comes on the heels of a United States military withdrawal from Afghanistan and the growing need to support thousands of fleeing Afghan refugees that are resettling in the state.

“Commissioners continue to lead with courage and compassion to help serve young children and their families,” said Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, First 5 California’s Chief Deputy Director. “As a Vietnamese-American refugee, I know just how critical it is that federal assistance be complemented with state, local, and community support, especially for our youngest arrivals and their families.”

An estimated 124,000 Afghan refugees are resettling in the United States and state officials project one-third of these arrivals will resettle in California. Current estimates show 45–50 percent of arrivals will be under the age of 18 and approximately 25 percent of those will be children ages 0 to 4.

First 5 California Deputy Director Max Vargas presented on the topic and highlighted the daunting challenges facing refugees fleeing war-torn Afghanistan. Mr. Vargas stated, “I recall just how challenging it was for us to navigate a new world, new institutions, a new language, everything when my family and I fled terrorism and immigrated to the United States. That is why I’m heartened to see First 5 California, other state agencies, and local partners rise to the occasion to help welcome and support these newly arriving families.”

First 5 California will work with state and federal partners, resettlement agencies, First 5 county commissions, and other organizations to leverage this \$3 million, one-year commitment. The funding will help address a wide range of needs for arriving refugee families. This may include, but is not limited to, funding for housing assistance, child care, culturally and linguistically accessible support, mental health, legal aid, supplies, and other basic needs.

For more information, contact Max Vargas at [mvargas@ccfc.ca.gov](mailto:mvargas@ccfc.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.ccfc.ca.gov](http://www.ccfc.ca.gov).*