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First 5: *Jackie Thu-Huong Wong Named Incoming Executive Director of First 5 California*

SACRAMENTO, CA (March 1, 2022) - California's Children and Family Commission recently named Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, a refugee born during the fall of Saigon and the first woman of color as incoming Executive Director of [First 5 California](#). Ms. Wong previously served as Chief Deputy Director for First 5 California.

In the last three decades, Ms. Wong has worked tirelessly as an advocate for equity, health, education and to eliminate poverty among children, youth and families in the state. Ms. Wong's training as a social worker has resulted in sharing her expertise with diverse communities, specifically as it relates to helping children thrive to achieve their full potential.

"As Chair of First 5 California, I could not be more pleased to announce the appointment of Jackie Thu-Huong Wong as the next Executive Director," said First 5 California Chair, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris. "I have had the pleasure of working with Ms. Wong over the last year as we have navigated one of the most challenging times we've seen for children in a generation. Her nearly three decades of experience advocating for educational and economic equity for children, youth, and families will be of incredible value to the young children of California. But, as we welcome one leader, we say goodbye to another. I want to thank Camille Maben for her outstanding leadership at First 5 California over the last ten years, taking the Commission to new heights: putting the 0 to 5 population on the map and opening a dialogue on upstream investments and the often overlooked topic of prevention. Under Camille's leadership, First 5 has highlighted and reinforced the importance of investing in quality early care and education, and parent/child interactions for an entire generation of families. Further, she has led with compassion and empathy. I'm confident that Ms. Wong will build on the success of this work."

The Commission collaborated with First 5 California staff members during a national search process to identify candidates for the role of the executive director. The selection committee, led by Dr. Burke Harris, chair and Shana Hazan, vice chair vetted candidates who exemplify the mission of First 5 California, which is to provide equitable resources, services and programs, which are necessary for all children and families.

Ms. Wong will take the helm from Executive Director Camille Maben, under whom she worked closely with as Chief Deputy Director in the last year. Ms. Maben has made countless contributions to First 5 California and its partners by focusing on the youngest children, parents, educators and caregivers through campaigns such as Talk. Read. Sing.®

“While it’s never easy to say goodbye, I cannot think of a better person to pass the torch to than Jackie Thu-Huong Wong,” said Camille Maben, the current First 5 California Executive Director. “I have followed Ms. Wong’s career over the years, and I’ve been fortunate to work with her as she took on the role of First 5 California Chief Deputy Director. Ms. Wong’s whole child/whole family/whole community approach – fueled by a lifelong commitment to equity and justice – is key for change that so many of our children need. Her experience in education and health and human services will further explore critical issues of early childhood mental health, economic security, and racial justice. Ms. Wong’s leadership rings in an exciting new era at First 5 California, with opportunity, and I will be cheering her, and the entire First 5 California team, on from the sidelines.”

As the incoming Executive Director of First 5 California, Ms. Wong will play an integral role in communicating the importance of why the state’s youngest children, 0-5 require safe, stable and nurturing environments and relationships to have healthy lives. Her vision, expertise and commitment to children and families are integral to implementing the policies and initiatives that are needed to positively benefit communities throughout the state. She will utilize her voice and platform to further illustrate how trauma, inequity and stress-filled situations can have negative impacts on the most vulnerable populations. Ms. Wong’s unparalleled leadership will help guide First 5 California in the future.

“I am truly humbled and grateful for the opportunity to serve California as the next Executive Director for First 5 CA and to lead the organization in this new era,” said Jackie Thu-Huong Wong. “Growing up as a refugee, my parents instilled in me the importance of staying rooted in the history of our lived experiences and to center that in my service to others. I am honored to be working with a Commission and staff who are dedicated to ensuring that children 0-5, their families and communities are provided the best opportunities to live, learn and thrive. Lastly, I am thankful for Camille’s dedication to this work over the last several decades and wish her well in her retirement.”

Prior to joining First 5 California, Ms. Wong served as the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at GRACE, a private nonprofit dedicated to reducing child poverty in California. She was also the Government Relations Director for the National Center for Youth Law, Principal Policy Consultant to the California Senate President, and Statewide Director for

the Foster Youth Service at the California Department of Education. In addition to working with these organizations, she is President of the Washington Unified School Board in West Sacramento and a Professor for California State University, Sacramento's School Nurse Credential Program.

She is a mom to two school-age children and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Welfare and Psychology from University of California, Berkeley, and a Master of Social Work from California State University, Sacramento.

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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.