

May 31, 2023

Jacqueline Thu-Huong Wong, Executive Director
First 5 California
2389 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 260
Sacramento, CA 95833

RE: Supporting a Strong Start for CA Kids

Dear Jackie,

In 2018, the First 5 Association, California Children and Families Foundation, the Heising-Simons Foundation, and the Children's Data Network launched the [California Strong Start Index](#). The project, now in its fifth year, uses existing data on children and families and summarizes the constellation of resources available to California's newborns. Through our collaborative work, we have experienced the Strong Start Index as effective, valid, and useful.

- The Index adds unique insight into the conditions into which children are born, revealing wide geographic variability disparities by race/ethnicity that are already evident at the time of birth.
- Unlike most indices, scores have been shown to be empirically related to key indicators of child health and well-being, including child protection involvement and death before age 5.
- The Index has been used to monitor disparities and community needs, budget for policy advocacy and planning, and identify areas of highest priority for investment.

In short, the Index has been a critical tool for the First 5 Association, our Center for Children's Policy, our county First 5 Commissions, and the early childhood field to identify inequities and collectively advocate for more intentional and equitable investments for our youngest children.

Because of our experience with the Strong Start Index and the Children's Data Network, we are excited and supportive of the proposal [Supporting a Strong Start for CA Kids: The Children's Data Network's Proposal to Augment, Connect, Support, and Collect Population-Based Data about Young Children](#). Through this new collaboration with First 5 California, the entire First 5 Network and the early childhood field will access critically needed information concerning the needs and experiences of families with young children. This will help us uplift inequities, refine policy positions, and identify new and innovative solutions to ensure every child in California has a *strong start*.

Thank you for considering this important investment and for your commitment to the young children and families of California.

Sincerely,



Avo Makdessian
Executive Director