



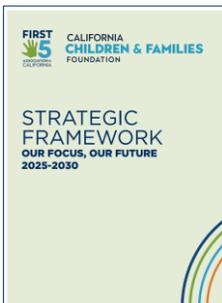
FIRST 5 CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S POLICY



### First 5 San Mateo County Commission Meeting January 26, 2026



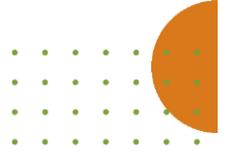
## First 5 Association Goals



**ADVOCATE** for state and federal public policies and funding that support California's young children and families

**POSITION** First 5s to thrive

**DEVELOP** leaders across the First 5 Network and the broader early childhood field



# First 5 Association – Ways We Work

- ✓ Policy Research and Development
- ✓ Government Affairs and Advocacy
- ✓ Relationships and Influence
- ✓ Leadership Development and Learning Opportunities
- ✓ First 5 Network Support
- ✓ Strategic Communications

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## Membership Benefits

- Member Learning and Engagement
- Policy Development and Advocacy
- Communications
- Consultation and Intermediary Services

**MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**

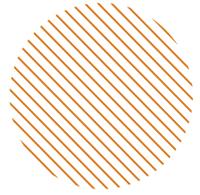
FIRST 5  
ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

First 5 Association of California offers several benefits to member First 5 county commissions.

<p><b>Member Learning and Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the First 5 Leadership Institute – a comprehensive member education and leadership development institute that provides training on relevant and timely topics such as state and federal policy implementation, funding and partnership opportunities, leadership development, mentorship, and fellowship.</li> <li>• Networking events including the First 5 Annual Summit</li> <li>• Regional and issue-specific workshops for peer learning, cross-sharing, and collaboration with other First 5 County Commissions</li> <li>• Resource library on Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) principles, staff operations, strategic case examples, and other resources and samples from courses within the First 5 Network</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy Development and Advocacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct state and federal lobbying on behalf of members</li> <li>• Annual legislative advocacy day at the State Capitol</li> <li>• State policy development, analysis and updates for members</li> <li>• Advocacy assets including talking points and fact sheets directed to local, state, and federal leaders</li> <li>• State and federal legislation and budget tracking that affect local First 5 and communities</li> <li>• Access to the First 5 Center for Children's Policy which provides policy research, development, and publications on issues relevant to First 5 and the broader five field</li> <li>• Access to research and policy briefs detailing First 5 successes and emerging issues</li> <li>• Access and introductions to state leaders, including legislators, members of state Governor's Office, and key partner coalitions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications strategy, brief positioning, and messaging for the Network</li> <li>• Weekly member newsletter, Network highlights, learning and funding opportunities</li> <li>• Regular communications calls and trainings</li> <li>• Customizable communications assets</li> <li>• Advocacy and social media toolkits</li> <li>• Collecting and communicating First 5 stories of community impact to state and federal leaders, media, and the early childhood field</li> </ul>	<p><b>Fee-based Consultation and Intermediary Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance for program and policy implementation</li> <li>• Program intake systems and evaluation design consultation</li> <li>• Social grantmaking services on behalf of members that are seamless, efficient, and cost-effective</li> <li>• Pooled funding support and intake</li> </ul>



## 2026 Gubernatorial Engagement and Education



A statewide campaign ensuring California's next governor prioritizes young children and families



### Who We Are:

- Choose Children is guided by a diverse California network of over three dozen child advocates and service organizations committed to creating a thriving future for California children and families
- We work to ensure that candidates for California Governor take action and support investment and approaches that advance the well-being, care, and learning of young children, their families, and the essential workers who care for them.
- Choose Children is led by the First 5 Association of California, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, The Children's Partnership, and the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment.





### Context and Why Now?

California has the 4th largest economy in the world, yet our children's health and well-being do not match our economic output.

- Nearly **19%** of California Children live in poverty – fourth worst in the nation
- California ranks fourth for most expensive child care in the country **averaging \$21,945 per year** – nearly three times more than an in-state college tuition.
- **Sixty percent** of California babies are not getting all their recommended well-child visits, and for African American babies, that number rises to 75 percent.
- **17%** of early educators make less than a living wage



### Strategies

1. Compile Research, Community Needs, and Voter Polling
2. Direct Candidate Engagement, Host Events, and Forums
3. Media: Place the Early Childhood Issue in the Context of the Governor's Race
4. Develop a Consensus Policy Agenda
5. Track and Influence Outcomes





### Policy Platform

1. **System navigation:** Ensuring California families can easily access guidance and peer assistance for economic, social-emotional, and developmental services
2. **Economic Security:** Providing California families with the necessary financial resources and support for their child's healthy development.
3. **Birth Justice:** Delivering high-quality, culturally sensitive care and seamless support to birthing people and families before, during, and after birth in California.
4. **Early Learning and Care:** Offering California families access to affordable, high-quality, and culturally and linguistically appropriate early learning and care for children from birth to age 5
5. **Health Coverage and Access:** Guaranteeing affordable and high-quality health coverage and care for California families with young children.
6. **Governance:** Establishing a robust infrastructure and governance in California to prioritize and support families with young children and birthing people.

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### Polling Results

## Survey Methodology

<b>Dates</b>	November 7-17, 2025
<b>Survey Type</b>	Dual-mode Voter Survey
<b>Research Population</b>	Likely November 2028 Voters, including oversamples of Likely June 2026; an additional oversample of parents with children ages 12 and under was obtained through opt-in online panels.
<b>Total Interviews</b>	<b>801 Likely November 2028 voters, including an oversample to reach 601 likely June 2026 voters statewide;</b> with an additional oversample <b>329 parents with children ages 12 and under.</b>
<b>Margin of Sampling Error</b>	(Likely November 2028 and Likely June 2026) $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level (Likely June 2026 Undecided Voters) $\pm 7.6\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level
<b>Contact Methods</b>	 Telephone Calls  Email Invitations  Text Invitations
<b>Data Collection Modes</b>	 Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews
<b>Languages</b>	English & Spanish

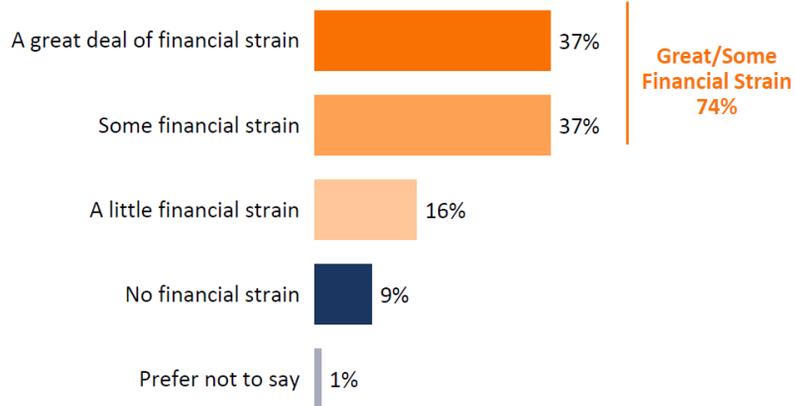
(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)

## Key Findings

- More than four in five California voters agree that the next Governor should make California a place young children can thrive, including more than nine in ten parents of children ages 12 and under.
- Nearly nine in ten California voters support polices that:
  - Make childcare and preschool affordable
  - Provide quality prenatal and postpartum care
  - Provide fair wages and benefits for childcare workers
  - Build children’s behavioral / mental health workforce
  - Increase mental health support for young kids and caregivers
- Affordability and cost of living are a top priority for California voters.
  - Many struggle to make housing payments, have postponed medical care for affordability reasons, and skipped meals for affordability reasons.
  - Nearly three-quarters of parents say raising children places a financial strain on their family.
  - Families were widely affected by the recent government shutdown.

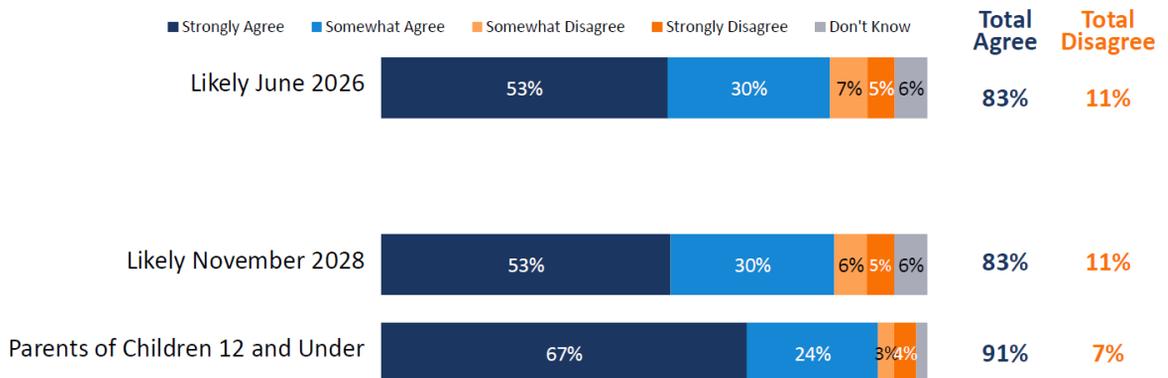
## Among parents with kids under age 12, three-quarters say the cost of raising children places a financial strain on their family.

*Does the cost of raising children place a financial strain on you and your family?*



## More than four in five voters think the next Governor should prioritize making California a place where families with young children can live and thrive.

*California's next Governor should prioritize policies that make California a place where families with young children can live and thrive*



## Majorities of likely June voters support all of the proposed policies.

Policy	Total Support			
	All Voters	Likely June 2026 Voters	Likely June 2026 Undecided Voters Only	Parents of Children 12 and Under
Make child care & preschool affordable	88%	84%	87%	91%
Provide quality prenatal & postpartum care	88%	84%	88%	90%
Fair wages & benefits for child-care workers	86%	83%	84%	85%
Build children's behavioral/mental health workforce	85%	83%	86%	78%
Increase mental-health support for young kids & caregivers	85%	80%	81%	88%
Remove barriers to accessing essential services	81%	80%	83%	77%
Guarantee child care for homeless families	78%	73%	78%	80%
Provide housing support for families at risk of homelessness	78%	81%	86%	88%
Tax incentives for employer-provided child care	76%	79%	78%	84%
Guarantee three months paid family leave	75%	73%	83%	82%
^Make social services easier to access	75%	76%	84%	84%
Expand early health care for infants, toddlers & new mothers	72%	76%	81%	85%
Expand doula & midwife training	72%	72%	65%	73%
Screen children for developmental/behavioral needs & connect to support	71%	74%	84%	74%
Fund child-care & early-learning classroom construction	67%	72%	81%	81%
Expand child-care tax credit	67%	70%	74%	80%
Ensure in-home support for new mothers	59%	66%	71%	77%
Provide monthly income for low-income & single mothers	52%	59%	66%	73%

Q16. Here are a list of policies that have been proposed to support children and families in California. Please indicate whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each one. ^Not Part of Half Sample



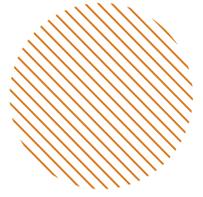
Learn about Choose Children 2026 and stay engaged!

- Join our email list
- Track Events with Candidates
- Look at our new poll findings
- Learn about our Policy Primer and Platform





## Contact

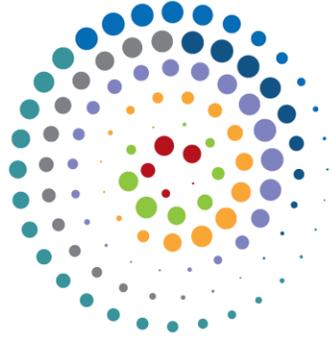


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# Thank You





# COUNTY OF SAN MATEO HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY



## 2026 Safety Net Impacts

Claire Cunningham  
January 26, 2026



Program	Residents	Notes
CalFresh	~34,800	~\$6.5M in benefits issued monthly (100% federal)
Medi-Cal	~155,000	~21% of SMC residents

# Timeline: Changes to Eligibility



# Overview of H.R. 1's Changes to CalFresh

- Some CalFresh recipients will get less money for food.
- More CalFresh recipients will need to work to keep their benefits.
- Many lawfully present immigrants will no longer qualify for CalFresh.
- There are changes to how utility costs are counted for some CalFresh recipients.
- California will have to pay more money to help run the CalFresh program, even for some of the food benefits themselves.



# Noncitizen Eligibility for CalFresh

*What:* H.R. 1 eliminated certain categories of qualified immigrants so they can no longer receive CalFresh

*Who:*

- Certain lawfully present noncitizens such as asylees, refugees, parolees, battered noncitizens, trafficking victims, and others are no longer eligible
- Noncitizen eligibility limited to: Lawfully Permanent Residents (LPR), Cuban or Haitian Entrants, and individuals who reside in the U.S. in accordance with a Compact of Free Association (COFA) agreement -- Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau
- Due to this change, 1,000 County residents will lose CalFresh benefits

*When:* April 1, 2026

# CalFresh Work Requirements



*What:* Unless exempted, CalFresh recipients must meet work requirements to get or keep their CalFresh benefits per the ABAWD federal rule. Must work, volunteer or go to school 20 hours/week.

*Who:*

- CalFresh recipients who are: (1) between the ages of 18-64, (2) don't have a dependent child under 14, (3) are not receiving disability benefits from any source
- 13,700 SMC residents are affected; 3,700 of them will be subject to work requirements on 2/1/26 and the rest will likely be exempted
- Immediately eliminates exemptions for people experiencing homelessness, adults under age 24 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday, and veterans.

*When:* June 1, 2026

*More info:* [Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents](#)

# Medi-Cal Asset Test Limits



This is a state budget impact – not related to H.R. 1

*What:* Reinstates the Medi-Cal asset test to consider resources, including property and other assets, when determining Medi-Cal eligibility for applicants or members whose eligibility is not based on modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) financial methods. The asset limit will be \$130,000 for an individual, and \$65,000 additional for each individual included in the household.

*Who:* Adults 65+, individuals with a disability, individuals living in a nursing home and families with income over the Medi-Cal limit based on federal tax rules

*When:* January 1, 2026

# Medi-Cal Immigration Eligibility



*What:* Medi-Cal eligibility will be limited to U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents after a 5-year waiting period and specified Cuban and Haitian nationals.

*Who:* This provision is estimated to potentially impact 24,700 individuals in the County who would lose their eligibility.

*When:* October 1, 2026

*Also:* State budget provisions freeze enrollment for individuals ages 19 and older with Unsatisfactory Immigration Status (UIS) effective January 2026 and require co-payments for individuals with UIS who are already enrolled prior to the freeze effective July 2027. Of the 24,700 individuals impacted by the federal changes, there are currently 20,000 individuals who meet the definition of UIS in the County and would be impacted by these state changes.

# Medi-Cal Dental Coverage



What: Some Medi-Cal members will stop getting full-scope dental services

Who: See DHCS chart - [Immigration Status Categories](#)

When: July 1, 2026

Members can still get care for emergency dental needs, including:

- Serious tooth pain
- Infections
- Tooth extractions

Members will also get full-scope dental if:

- They are a former foster youth under age 26 who was in foster care on their 18th birthday, or
- They are pregnant (and they will get it for one year after their pregnancy ends)

# Medi-Cal Work Requirements



## *What:*

- Adults ages 19-64 will have to meet one of several conditions to receive Medi-Cal, such as enrolling in school at least half-time, earning monthly income equal to 80 hours at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 (or \$580 per month), or completing 80 hours per month of work, community service, or similar activities.
- Individuals who are discontinued as a result of not meeting the work requirement cannot access subsidized marketplace coverage through Covered California.

*Who:* 61,000 current SMC beneficiaries

*When:* January 1, 2027

# Medi-Cal Eligibility Verification



*What:* H.R. 1 changes eligibility verification requirements for the Medi-Cal expansion population from annually to every six months

*Who:* The expanded Medi-Cal population includes adults ages 18 to 64 with incomes up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$21,597 for an individual in 2025). Individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are exempt from this provision. The County anticipates that 52,000 of the 93,000 annual renewals currently processed by ESS would be subject to the twice annual redeterminations.

*When:* January 1, 2027

# Retroactive Medi-Cal Coverage



*What:* Current law also allows states to offer 90 days of retroactive Medi-Cal coverage for new enrollees. Beginning in 2027, H.R. 1 would reduce retroactive coverage to one month prior to application for individuals age 19-64 under the ACA expansion and to two months for the traditional Medi-Cal population.

*When:* January 1, 2027

Shortened retroactive Medi-Cal coverage would also reduce reimbursements for emergency departments, hospitals, and other safety-net providers. This has the potential to increase medical debt for those who are billed for costly services received before their Medi-Cal enrollment is finalized.



VIVA  
social impact  
partners

# F5SMC Communications Planning Community: Community Engagement

**Commission Meeting**  
January 26, 2026

# Community Engagement Activities (Nov '25-Jan '26)

1. Two Family Focus Groups (English and Spanish; Zoom)
2. Family Survey (English, Spanish, and Chinese)
3. Commissioner Survey
4. Community Partner Survey



# Key Takeaways

1. **Parents and caregivers know the name First 5, but not the full role or value.** Awareness exists, but understanding is shallow, creating an opportunity to clarify F5SMC's purpose and impact.
2. **Families look to trusted people and everyday channels for information.** Important for F5SMC to show up through these messengers, not just owned platforms.
3. **Families want practical, local and actional supports.** Strongest demand for family friendly events, basic needs resources, local information and clear guidance.
4. **Commissioners look to F5SMC to translate policy into impact.** Deliver clear credible impact data and tools to advocate early childhood as a countywide priority.
5. **Community partner organizations see F5SMC as the connector between families, partners and systems.** Organizations are looking for timely, local data and stronger alignments to collectively advance shared goals.



# 1 Focus Group Key Learnings



# Who We Heard From



**13** participants across **2** focus groups

- English Focus Group: 9 participants
- Spanish Focus Group: 4 participants



Parents with **1 to 3 children** ages 0-6

- Children's ages ranged from **10 months** to **5 years old**



Parents from **4 Regions in San Mateo County**

- South County: 6; North County: 2; Mid-County: 3; Coastside: 2



# What We Heard from Participants

Parents want practical, culturally relevant guidance delivered simply, visually, and through trusted channels.



## Core needs consistent across both groups.

Parents seek guidance on child development, access to developmental supports, help choosing schools and information about local activities and events.



## Access and relevance matter.

Spanish speaking families emphasized the need for more accessible resources and culturally and linguistically relevant content.



## Support beyond early learning.

English speaking families expressed interest in workforce and parent supports, along with affordable or free family activities.



## How information is delivered is as important as what is shared.

Families rely on social media, websites, schools and community organizations with a strong preference for visual, concise and easy to understand content.





Es para mí dedicar tiempo a ellos, ya cuando uno se convierte en mamá ya no es todo el tiempo para ti, ya tienes que dividirlo entre ellos; tu tiempo está basado en tus hijos.

*Translation: "For me, it's about dedicating time to them. When you become a mom, not all your time is yours anymore; you have to divide your time among them; your time is based on your children's."*



# 2 Family Survey Learnings



# Who We Heard From



**64** participants



Families that were **expecting or have children under age 6**



# Family Survey Highlights

**Awareness of F5SMC is limited, but parents actively seek practical, local support.**



**Low awareness of F5SMC.** Recognition is stronger for the name than for the mission or services.



**Where parents get information.** Parents rely on trusted people and everyday search, not official sites.



**What parents are looking for and how often.** Preference for actionable, local information shared regularly (weekly preferred over monthly).



# Thoughts from Parents

“More weekend programs for parents who would love to play and learn with their kids but can't take time off work.”



“...Thank you for having the events at the libraries because it gives parents the opportunity to socialize and form a village.”



“Would love to see more Chinese version information or family-friendly events. Help my children on socializing other friends.”



# 3 Commissioner Survey



# Commissioner Issues of Interest & Supporting Resources

## Key Issues of Interest

- **Basic Needs & Stability.** Food insecurity, housing, child care.
- **Child & Family Well Being.** Mental and behavioral health, ACEs, medical care/immunizations.
- **Early Identification & Development.** Developmental delays and access to early intervention.

## Resources to Support Commissioners as Ambassadors

- **Issue One-Pagers.** Concise briefs and executive summaries on priority early childhood topics.
- **Regular Updates.** Monthly or quarterly newsletters with key initiatives, events and legislative context.
- **Shareable Materials.** Social media and digital content to support informed conversations with constituents and partners.



# Communication Priorities & Measures of Success

## What to Prioritize in Communications

- **Policy & Funding Context.** Research, policy updates, and county-level interpretation to support decision making for children 0-5.
- **Impact & Accountability.** Data and stories that show progress towards F5SMC's mission.
- **Family Focused Resources.** Clear, accessible information on the importance of early childhood and how families access support.

## What Success Looks like in 3 Years

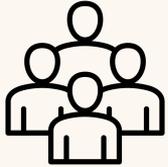
- Strong F5SMC **brand awareness** and credibility countywide.
- Families know where to go for **trusted childhood resources.**
- Clear, **consistent communication** demonstrating impact - even amid funding and political uncertainty.
- Broad understanding of the **importance of sustained investment in early childhood**, including mental health, child care and education.



# 4 Community Partner Survey



# Who We Heard From



**10** partner organizations



**5** respondents are currently receiving funding from F5SMC, and **5** are not.



# What They Hear & What is Needed from F5SMC

## What Families are Asking

- Access to **high quality child care**
- **Developmental concerns**, screenings (ASQs), early intervention
- **Financial insecurity** and housing
- **Mental health support** for parents and educators

## Where Partners & Families Turn for Information

- **Trusted relationships** from families, friends, primary care providers, early childhood educators
- **Digital sources** like newsletters, blogs, LinkedIn, research and data from partner organizations
- **Direct, relationship based communication** is most effective (in person, texts, calls)

## How Partners Want F5SMC to Support Them

- **Clear, shareable information** on local resources for children 0-5
- **Data, research, and success stories** that demonstrate impact
- **Alignment and coordination** around policy priorities, campaigns and funding opportunities
- **Partnership and capacity building** to strengthen their role as early childhood messengers



# Next Steps



# Next Steps

- Incorporate community engagement findings into draft 2026 - 2030 Communications Plan
- Review Communications Plan with F5SMC, end of February
- Share final 2026-2030 Communications Plan with the Commision, end of March



# Commission Discussion



# Reflections

Are there key takeaways or insights that you took away from these findings?

