May 14, 2012

The Honorable Felipe Fuentes  
California Assembly  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0039

Re: AB 1560 (Fuentes) - SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Fuentes:

On behalf of First 5 LA, I am writing to state our support for AB 1560 (Fuentes), which would align Medi-Cal and CalFresh income eligibility to ensure that low-income households get needed nutritional support. Families utilizing Medi-Cal would get nutrition support at home and children in those households would be certified for free school meals.

First 5 LA oversees the Los Angeles County allocation of funds from Proposition 10, which added a 50-cent tax on tobacco products sold in California. Funds raised help pay for health care, education and child development programs for children from the prenatal stage to age 5 and their families. First 5 LA's mission is to increase the number of young children who are physically and emotionally healthy, safe and ready to learn.

One of our goals is to increase access to healthy food options, something this bill would help achieve if passed. AB 1560 would streamline CalFresh eligibility for an additional 227,000 Californians, and better connect the 1.2 million Medi-Cal recipients to CalFresh services. Many Medi-Cal participants are currently eligible for but not participating in the CalFresh program. Directly connecting Medi-Cal recipients with CalFresh could increase CalFresh participation and provide households with crucial nutrition benefits that are a crucial component of health.

By enrolling Medi-Cal households in CalFresh, AB 1560 would also improve access to nutritious meals at school. Because of an existing practice known as direct certification, all children in CalFresh households are directly certified to receive free school meals; no additional paperwork is required.
With nearly 10-17 percent of California children ages 2 to 5 either overweight or obese, there is great need in California for improved access to healthy foods. AB 1560 would be an effective tool in increasing CalFresh participation, and would also provide administrative relief. For these reasons, we support the passage of AB 1872.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Steele
Interim Chief Executive Officer
First 5 LA

cc: California Assembly and Senate - Los Angeles County delegation