Motion to Provide Funding to Preserve the Black Infant Health Program

In September 2009, and again in May 2010, the First 5 LA Commission voted to support Los Angeles County’s Black Infant Health Program after it experienced devastating state budget cuts. As a result, First 5 LA entered into agreements with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, the City of Long Beach Department of Public Health and the City of Pasadena Department of Health, for a total of $1,161,986 to prevent interruption of these critical services. Despite significant advocacy, the State has not reinstated the Black Infant Health Program funding and similar to other key programs such as Healthy Families; First 5 LA has stepped in to fill the gap by providing the necessary funds. As discussed in previous years, filling a funding gap does not amount to “supplanting” when the State funding for this program does not exist.

The current agreements with community-based agencies are scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2011. This will leave the County’s Department of Public Health no choice but to sharply reduce by 75% the countywide Black Infant Health Program and provide services to families in limited geographic areas. Rather than limiting the services or asking the First 5 LA Commission to consider refunding the Black Infant Health Program for just one more year, I am requesting a motion to provide transition funding at the current level for the three Black Infant Health Programs in Los Angeles County through June 30, 2014.

The Black Infant Health Program was established in 1989 by the State to address the high rate of infant mortality among African American families and has
proven to be an effective program. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health’s data shows that since 2000, the program has seen a 50% reduction in the number of low-birth weight babies born to clients and has successfully reduced infant mortality rates among program participants by 50%.

The Prenatal Care Outreach and Social Support and Empowerment services provided to the target population of at-risk pregnant and parenting African Americans is the perfect example of intensive family strengthening efforts that are part of First 5LA’s own Strategic Plan. The work of providing family engagement and referring to community resources is the backbone of the Black Infant Health program in Los Angeles County.

As stated in the First 5LA Strategic Plan: All children need to be born healthy; addressing the problem of low birth weight babies in the African American community in Los Angeles County should be of utmost importance to this Commission.

I therefore move that the First 5 LA Commission continue their investment in the Black Infant Health Program at the current level through June 2014 or until the place-based planning efforts are finalized and include strategies to address the alarming birth outcome inequities to the African American population in Los Angeles County.