The Honorable Kevin de León  
California Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5108  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 970 (De León) - SUPPORT

Dear Senator de León:

On behalf of First 5 LA, I am writing to express our support for SB 970 (de León). This measure would integrate the process for applications and renewals for public programs such as CalFresh and CalWORKs with the new online health coverage application process.

First 5 LA, a child advocacy and public grant making organization, was created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues to improve the lives of children from prenatal through age 5 in Los Angeles County. First 5 LA recognizes the importance of CalFresh and CalWORKs benefits to low-income children and their families. Increasing access to these programs for working families with young children is especially important in ensuring their health and well-being.

Currently, CalFresh and CalWORKs are integrated with Medi-Cal and housed in the same computer system (State Automated Welfare System, or SAWS). This enables individuals to fill out one application that will enroll them in all of the programs for which they are qualified. However, case management is now at risk of becoming separated or “de-coupled” during the development of the California Healthcare Eligibility, Enrollment and Retention System (Cal-HEERS), the state’s new eligibility and enrollment information technology (IT) system.

SB 970 would require the horizontal integration between health care and human services enrollment as encouraged by the Affordable Care Act, Section 1561. The bill also provides that if the health program renewal form has the necessary information to renew eligibility for CalWORKs or CalFresh, that it satisfies the general renewal requirements. This ensures that the application process for multiple benefits does not become more difficult after 2014.
The bill would also enable California to continue working towards full participation in federally funded human service and work support programs. SB 970 would allow California to take advantage of the enhanced 90 percent federal funding that can be used for the shared cost of horizontal integration through December 31, 2015.

For these reasons, we strongly support the passage of SB 970.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Steele
Interim Chief Executive Officer
First 5 LA

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cc: Members of the Senate Health Committee
    Members of the Los Angeles County delegation