The Honorable Shirley Weber
Assemblymember
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: ACR 45 (Weber) - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Weber:

On behalf of First 5 LA, I am writing to state our support for ACR 45, which urges the California State Legislature, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Governor to restore budget funding to early care and education programs and to support efforts to fund and implement the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and other programs that support early care and education.

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 improve the quality of early care and education programs so that children become ready for kindergarten.

Recent research demonstrates that 90 percent of a child’s brain development occurs by age 5 and that early engagement can help cement effective learning habits that directly lead to academic success later in life. One recent study found that the lack of an early childhood education resulted in a child being 25 percent more likely to drop out of school, 40 percent more likely to become a teen parent, 60 percent more likely never to attend college, and 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime. Further, issues such as grade retention and placement in special education are mitigated by investing in early childhood education.

Unfortunately, recent budget cuts have threatened the ability of many young children and their families to receive quality early care and education (ECE), a situation that has disastrous effects on our future workforce. These budget cuts, which total close to $1.2 billion since 2009, do not simply reduce ECE program access for children, they hinder the ability to attract and retain a high-quality early childhood workforce. Despite the importance of early childhood brain development, early childhood educators are the lowest paid of their teaching peers, a situation that leads to many early childhood teachers leaving their field for more highly compensated K-12 teaching positions.
ACR 45 is consistent with the goals of First 5 LA and promotes the aim of ensuring that children are equipped with the skills needed to start school ready to learn and placed on a pathway to read at grade level by the third grade. First 5 LA is already committed to expanding high-quality early education and the development of a stable, committed, and skilled workforce in Los Angeles County. First 5 LA has invested in Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), which provides nearly 10,000 preschool slots to Los Angeles County children every year. LAUP also utilizes a 5-Star QRIS tool, which includes measures for teacher qualifications, early childhood environment, group size, and adult-child ratio, among other factors.

First 5 LA is in strong support of ACR 45 and we look forward to partnering with you to highlight the important role that early care and education plays in securing an educated, versatile, and stable workforce to help keep California's economy vibrant and strong for years to come. ACR 45 is an important step towards restoring and expanding early care and education to children across the state, allowing them to live up to their full potential and we are hopeful that the legislature will provide their support.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Tessa Charnofsky, Government Affairs Manager, at TCharnofsky@First5LA.org.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kim Belshé
Executive Director
First 5 LA

cc:
Chair of the Legislative Black Caucus Holly Mitchell
Speaker of the Assembly John Pérez
Assembly Republican Leader Connie Conway
Chair of the Assembly Education Committee Joan Buchanan
Chair of the Senate Education Committee Carol Liu
Strategic Counsel PLC
Los Angeles County Office of Education