

First 5 LA

Federal Policy Agenda

Our Mission

First 5 LA's mission is to increase the number of Los Angeles County children ages 0 to 5 who are physically and emotionally healthy, ready to learn, and safe from harm.

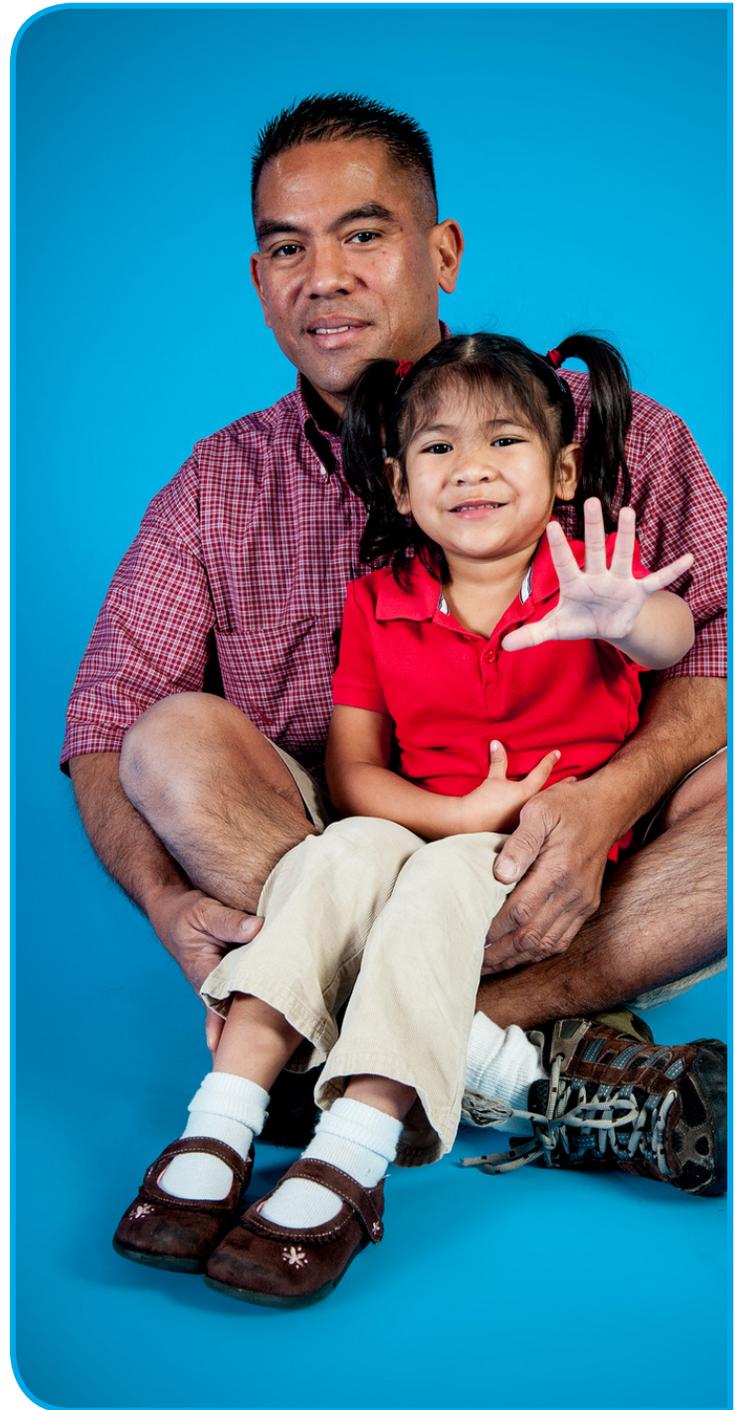
We were established in 1998 after California voters approved Proposition 10, which funds health, safety and early education programs for children prenatal to age 5 through tobacco products tax revenue. A local First 5 commission was created in each of the state's 58 counties to administer Prop 10 funds, which are allocated based on each county's birth rate.

By investing more than \$1 billion from tobacco tax revenues in the last 15 years, First 5 LA has turned a negative habit into positive programs that benefit L.A. County's youngest kids. Our five core values - families, communities, results, learning and advocacy - guide us in building public support for targeted programs that address the needs of young children and their families. Given that tobacco is a declining revenue source, First 5 LA is partnering with public and private sector organizations to identify resources to support and expand services to vulnerable children and families.

Policy Priorities

To achieve large scale and lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities, First 5 LA proactively seeks long-term public policy change. First 5 LA uses its unique role to build public support for policies and programs that benefit children prenatal through 5 and their families utilizing efforts that complement First 5 LA's place-based investments.

In 2013, the First 5 LA Commission identified two priority areas to help focus and prioritize the work we do in the policy arena - preserving and expanding both high quality early care and education and home visitation for families with young children. As part of our current Strategic Plan (2009-2015), our Commission adopted a more comprehensive 10 point policy agenda that aim to increase children's developmental potential, improve the public's access to quality health and nutrition resources, and help parents and caregivers raise children in safe environments.



Champions For Our Children
www.First5LA.org



Policy Goals

Early Education Expansion

- The Strong Start for America's Children Act, sponsored by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) (S. 1697) and Representatives George Miller (D-CA) and Richard Hanna (R-NY) (HR 3461), would improve early care and education programs by expanding high-quality preschool supported through new federal-state cost-sharing partnerships that reach all 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families living at or below 200 percent of the poverty line. The Senate bill currently has 32 cosponsors, while the House bill has 135. **First 5 LA supports this bill and urges legislators to cosponsor it if they have not already done so.**
- The Fiscal Year 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act provided \$500 million for **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership** grants to support the expansion of Early Head Start and high quality child care for infants and toddlers. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently released the grant application for this crucial funding. The FY 2014 omnibus also provided \$250 million for **Preschool Development Grants** to support States to (1) build or enhance a preschool program infrastructure that would enable the delivery of high-quality preschool services to children, and (2) expand high-quality preschool programs in targeted communities that would serve as models for expanding preschool to all 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families. HHS and the Education Department will soon release the grant application for this program. **First 5 LA supports increasing funding for these critical investments that will improve young children's readiness for school.**

- **Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)**

CCDBG is the primary federal grant program that provides child care assistance for families and funds child care quality initiatives. With reauthorization of CCDBG pending (the Senate passed S. 1086 by a bipartisan vote of 96-2), First 5 LA supports efforts to improve proposed quality enhancements while also supporting efforts to expand funding so that states and providers are not forced to cut slots in order to enhance quality. **We urge the House to move forward on the CCDBG reauthorization.** Even if CCDBG is not reauthorized this year, HHS has proposed new regulations that include very similar quality improvements for grantees. **Thus, we call on Congress to provide an increase of \$100 million for FY 2015 as proposed by the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee.**

Home Visitation Expansion

Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visitation Program (MIECHV)

Created in 2010, MIECHV provides funds for states to create or supplement existing home visitation programs. MIECHV facilitates collaboration and partnership at the federal, state, and community levels to improve the health of at-risk children through evidence-based and promising practices home visiting programs. The home visiting programs reach pregnant women, expectant fathers, and parents and caregivers of children under the age of 5.

In March of this year Congress included as part of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-93) an extension of funding for MIECHV just until March 2015. **First 5 LA supports a longer term expansion with increased funding.**

Eliminate the Sequester

In Fiscal Year 2013 sequestration cut early learning programs by 5 percent, which resulted, among other harmful effects, in 57,000 fewer low-income children being served by Head Start. While the FY 2014 omnibus bill restored those cuts, the Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) spending cap for FY 15, FY 16 and beyond will continue to squeeze programs like Head Start and CCDBG. NDD spending as a share of GDP will decline to its lowest level since 1962! In addition, MIECHV, as one of the small number of mandatory funded programs subject to the sequester, has been cut each year since FY 13. Most recently by 7%. **Thus, First 5 LA urges Congress to replace the sequester in order to provide room for needed investments in these programs.**