



## Memo

**To:** Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

**From:** Tyla Adams, Program Manager (On behalf of the Administration Finance Committee)

**Date:** March 17, 2022

**Re:** **Recommendation to update Policy Platform for 2022**

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### **Background**

In October 2017, the Commission adopted a new Advocacy Policy, which provides guidance on advocacy activities and calls for annual updates to the Policy Platform. The Advocacy Policy states that staff determines whether a policy matter is in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Policy Platform, and how the issue will affect children prenatal through age five and their families, and/or First 5 Ventura County (F5VC), before engaging in advocacy activities.

The Policy Platform is designed to outline a comprehensive set of recommendations to support children prenatal through age five, their families, and service providers. Using the Policy Platform as a guide, F5VC staff is able to engage in timely, strategic advocacy activities. The Policy Platform is closely aligned with our Strategic Plan, and outlines a policy agenda for F5VC that can be shared with champions of early learning throughout Ventura County to maximize our impact through collaboration and consistency in messaging.

Over the past year, F5VC participated in a variety of advocacy activities including signing onto letters of support, meeting virtually with legislators, participating in First 5 Association statewide advocacy activities, and educating the public and policymakers particularly through social media. First 5s advocated successfully for the Vape Tax, which aims to discourage vaping, particularly among youth, by taxing vaping products like tobacco. This legislation guarantees F5VC, and First 5s across the state, will receive their tax equivalency to continue funding education programs.

The proposed Policy Platform was updated to reflect the needs and opportunities that have been highlighted during the pandemic and are aligned with the Strategic Plan. The proposed Policy Platform was reviewed and approved by Administration and Finance Committee.

### **Recommendation**

The recommendation is to adopt the updated Policy Platform (Attachment 1) that outlines a set of recommendations to support children prenatal through age five and service providers.



**2021-2022 F5VC Policy Platform**

F5VC's Policy Priorities are aligned with the strategic priorities and goals outlined in the 2020 – 2022 Strategic Plan. These priorities are intended to help us achieve the vision that all children are born healthy, thrive in nurturing environments, and enter school prepared and eager to learn.

**1. Comprehensive Child Health and Development**

- a. Ensure all children prenatal to age 5 and their families have access to and utilize comprehensive health and dental insurance
- b. Increase routine screenings for prenatal substance use, developmental delays, childhood trauma/Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and parental mental health, and improve the system for referral and follow-up through our Help Me Grow system of care
- c. Enhance primary care practices to include social and emotional development
- d. Address the social determinants of health and promote general healthy practices such as good oral health, healthy eating, physical activity, and breastfeeding, and avoiding exposure to harmful substances including tobacco, vaping, hookah, marijuana, and illicit substances

**2. Quality Early Learning**

- a. Promote the importance of the early years (prenatal – age three) and early relational health including home visitation programs, developmental screenings, optimum attachment and bonding, and early literacy experiences, particularly through Family Resource Centers
- b. Increase access to high quality early care and education programs for young children and their families, including through facilities, funding, and available spaces
- c. Promote early literacy as a pathway to school success
- d. Strengthen the compensation and professional qualification of the early childhood workforce

**3. Strong and Resilient Families**

- a. Increase parent and caregiver knowledge, understanding, and awareness of opportunities for early childhood development, healthy lifestyles, and the impact of trauma and toxic stress
- b. Increase social connections and support for parents, through policies promoting improved family leave, flexible work schedules, and family friendly benefits
- c. Provide parents, families, and the community with relevant, timely and culturally appropriate information, services, and support, especially for immigrant families who regularly report fear of utilizing services

#### 4. Program and Systems Integration

- Support parent leaders and communities to prioritize the health, education, and well-being of young children
- Ensure a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion to address and prevent childhood poverty, abuse, and neglect
- Increase awareness among policymakers and business owners around the importance of investing in early childhood and identify additional revenue streams to support the early childhood system
- Align and integrate systems of care at the state and local level to ensure that young children and their families have timely and seamless access to supports and services that best meet their needs