Report from Commission Staff
April 17, 2025

1. Administrative Updates

Proposition 10 Tax Distributions

- Ventura County revenues for July 2024 – February 2025 total $2,201,145, plus $1,335,800 for the annual backfill from Proposition 56 and $38,003 in CECET (CA e-cigarette tax) funds.
    - These disbursements represent 65% of the budgeted revenues with 67% of year lapsed.
- After evenly applying the annual Prop 56 backfill and CECET funds, we are currently running 10.4% lower than last year – a decrease of $362,389 as of February.
    - Contributors to the higher-than-expected decline for FY 2024-25 are a potential delayed impact of the flavor ban, lower enforcement, tax evasion (i.e., purchasing from other states), and lower tobacco usage. https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4966
    - Last fiscal year, an 11.3% decrease in tobacco tax revenues was budgeted based on Department of Finance projections that considered the potential impact of the ban on flavored tobacco products, however, the actual decrease realized was only 4.5%.
    - The Commission budgeted for a 4% decrease in tobacco tax revenues, which was based upon the prior year forecast. Since the actual revenues for FY 2023-24 came in higher, the budget variance is mitigated.
- Staff is closely monitoring monthly disbursements and will report back regularly.

Congratulations, Petra!

- Petra was named one of the top 50 Women in Business by the Pacific Coast Business Times (see attached).

2. Updates on Commission Initiatives

Early Childhood Programs – ECP (NfL, Help Me Grow, and Welcome Every Baby)

- NfL at CA Association for the Education of Young Children (CAAEYC) conference
    - NfL Program Administrators Lilia Gurrola, Jhoelle Aspura-Arca, and Shelby Ferns presented at the 2025 CAAEYC Conference in Santa Clara on 4/13.
    - With a conference theme of “Diverse Voices, Joyful Choices: Shaping the Future of Early Childhood Education," the team presented on NfL programming that promotes aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Fatherhood Initiative
    - ECP Program Manager, Mario Rodriguez, conducted a father engagement training to 29 WIC staff.
    - The 2nd Annual Fatherhood Summit will take place on April 26th at Rio Plaza Middle School from 2:30 to 5:30 pm.

- Help Me Grow (HMG)
    - The 2024 Annual HMG Fidelity Assessment was submitted to HMG National in April, renewing our commitment to the HMG model.

Early Literacy

- Take 5 and Read to Kids! campaign to help raise awareness about the importance of early childhood literacy will be Friday, May 2nd, throughout the county. The Kick-Off Breakfast will be held on Friday, April 25th, at CSUCI.
    - On April 29th, the Board of Supervisors will present the Proclamation of May 2, 2025, as Take 5 and Read to Kids! Day in Ventura County.
- F5VC has a partnership with the Oxnard Library to provide First 5 branded tote bags and materials to children under 5 who sign up for a library card.

MediCal/CalAIM Updates

- F5VC submitted a grant application for GCHP's RISE Grant for $2.1 million to support the development of a Family Resource and Wellness Hub.
    - RISE Grant Awards will be announced by June 2, 2025.
- F5VC staff attended a convening of local agencies and organizations participating in the Community Health Worker (CHW) Tri-Counties Collaborative, sponsored by the Santa Barbara Foundation.
    - Discussed were local CHW program challenges and opportunities, collaborative approaches to systems change, and a presentation on Medi-Cal Community Health Worker benefit opportunities from Community Health Synergy.
- F5VC continues to receive technical assistance (TA) from multiple entities, including First 5 Association, Community Health Synergy, Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies, and Respond Mindfully, LLC.
    - TA is focused on CHW contracting assistance in collaboration with First 5s from counties throughout the state.

Immigration Resources

- Know Your Rights training was provided to staff by El Concilio, providing information about immigration-related concerns and questions, including:
    - Overview of immigration services and local immigration enforcement climate.
    - Education on constitutional rights during ICE encounters.
    - Guidance on what to do if confronted by ICE at home or in public.

Advocacy

- National Head Start Association launched advocacy campaign fueled by funding uncertainties caused by the Payment Management Services slowdown, level funding instead of a much-needed increase, staff in the Office of Head Start being laid off, numerous executive orders without sufficient clarity, and the abrupt closing of five regional offices. Campaign includes:
    - Letter campaign to Congress
    - Parent/caregiver and alumni sign-on letter to President Trump
    - Potential public relations and social media campaign in response to President's proposed budget anticipated to be released in May.
        - Head Start is a vital program that provides comprehensive services and early learning to over a million families in every state.

- Central Coast First 5s advocate for Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit and Home Visitation programs.
    - First 5 Santa Barbara, representing F5 SLO, SB, and Ventura, met with Congressman Salud Carbajal in D.C.
    - Please see attached letter outlining policy issues discussed.

3. County, Regional, National Updates

First 5 Association (F5AC) Advocacy Day

- Over 50 First 5 leaders attended 80 meetings with legislators and the Governor's office.
    - Despite unprecedented uncertainty and a looming state budget deficit, the First 5 network was greeted with support by legislators – many of whom asked how they can help strengthen partnerships between state government and local First 5s.

First 5 California (F5CA)

- IMPACT Legacy FY 2025-26 invitation for grant renewal was released April 9, 2025.
    - The one-year renewal provides funding at 90% of 2023-25 annual allocations and continues a focus on regional approaches to supporting quality early care.
        - Ventura County Office of Education manages IMPACT Legacy, which provides funding to F5VC for quality improvement efforts of Parent and Child Together (PACT) programs at NfLs, libraries, and MICOP.
- New Parent Education Kit
    - After nearly a one year delay, Parent Kits can once more be ordered.
        - F5VC partners with over 100 organizations, agencies, clinics and other community partners on the distribution of the Parent Kit to pregnant and parenting individuals.
- First 5 California set to approve new Strategic Plan
    - Following a year-long process, F5CA will bring the Strategic Plan for adoption at the April 17, 2025 Commission Meeting.
    - To assist in the development of a new Strategic Plan, F5CA contracted with Arabella Advisors to draft a four-year plan, guiding the agency from 2025–2028.
        - F5CA's current plan expired in 2024.

Stanford Center on Early Childhood Working Paper released

- In February the Stanford Center on Early Childhood released a working paper on the New Ecology of Early Childhood.
    - Phil Fisher and Joan Lombardi focus on four domains that are changing the ecosystems of young children originally developed by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner.
    - These domains include (a) the persistence of poverty and increasing inequalities, (b) the unmet demand for quality child care, (c) the changing climate, and (d) the exponential acceleration of digital technology.

Upcoming Events

- Administration / Finance Committee - Friday, May 2, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
- Home Visitation Conference - May 29, 2025, 8 a.m. to noon, Oxnard Performing Arts Center
    - Please let staff know if you'd like to attend.

PACIFIC COAST BUSINESS TIMES

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TOP 50 WOMEN In Business

NONPROFITS

Dacia Harwood
Executive Director
Santa Barbara Historical Museum
Santa Barbara

Dacia Harwood has spent 14 years invigorating the museum's community education programs, outreach, and marketing efforts, and is now leading the museum as Executive Director. She remains a fierce believer in collaboration and cultural accessibility. One of her more recent exhibitions, Seasonal Soirées: Evening Couture 1880-1980, highlighted the museum's extensive clothing collection.

Harwood's experience also includes work on behalf of the Goleta Valley Historical Society where she produced festivals at Rancho la Patera & Stow House, including the creation of the Music at the Ranch concert series, and collaborative event Fiesta Ranchera. She is an active volunteer and in 2019 she was named 'Goleta's Finest' Volunteer by the Chamber of Commerce.

Petra Puls
Executive Director
First 5 Ventura County
Ventura

Petra Puls is a respected and passionate leader in the field of early childhood development and family support in Ventura County. As the Executive Director of First 5 Ventura County, a local independent government agency, she demonstrates vision and dedication to improve the quality and capacity for the much-needed services for pregnant women, infants, young children and their families.

Under Puls's leadership, First 5 VC has received recognitions for excellence across the state and nation for its family wellness/support programs and place-based services. Puls co-led a countywide coalition to develop a Family Wellness System that ensures families get the support they need.

Monica White
President, CEO
Food Share of Ventura County
Oxnard

Monica White joined Food Share of Ventura County as president & CEO in 2017 after having previously served on the Food Share board.

Since taking on the role, White led Food Share out of a period of financial challenges while responding to some of Ventura County's most critical hunger relief needs during the Thomas Fire and the COVID-19 pandemic. In its 47th year as Ventura County's food bank, Food Share served over 250,000 individuals last year through a network of 180 community partners. In 2024, Food Share distributed the equivalent of nearly 18 million meals in Ventura County.

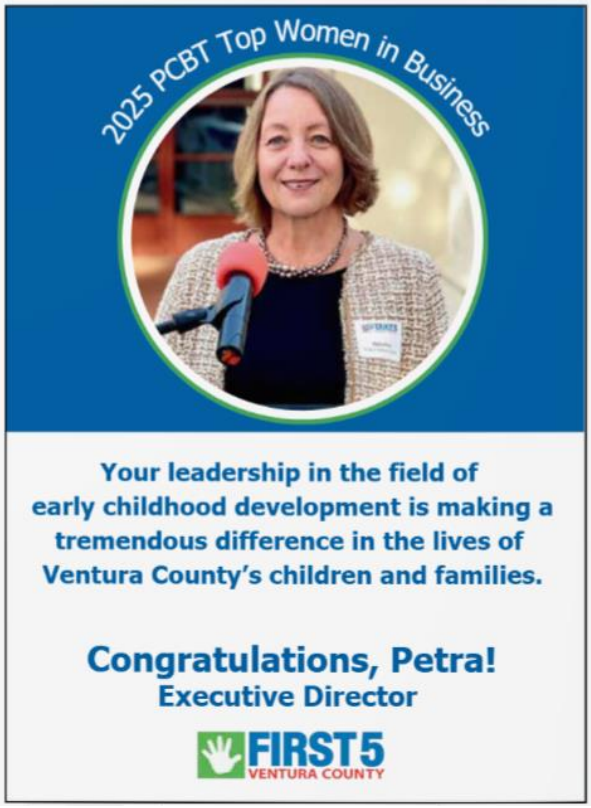
White comes to Food Share after working at the Ventura County Star as director of consumer sales and marketing.

White has been named in the Top 50 Women in Business by the Pacific Coast Business Times for the past 4 years and recently received the 2024 Rodney E. Fernandez Excellence in Visionary Leadership Award from the Ventura County Community Development Corporation.

Shawna Morris
CEO
Casa Pacifica
Camarillo

Shawna Morris brings more than 25 years' experience in the behavioral and mental health care fields to her role as Chief Executive Officer of Casa Pacifica. Her extensive history of executive leadership includes 18 years as senior vice president and chief operating officer of Menninger Clinic, where she managed a successful merger with Baylor University College of Medicine and led a $50 million capital campaign to establish the organization's 50-acre campus in Houston.

Morris also served as president and chief executive officer of the Phoenix House California and Texas, overseeing a chain of six inpatient facilities along with a number of outpatient addiction and mental health treatment programs.



Top Women in Business | Pacific Coast Business Times

April 2025

The Honorable Congressman Salud Carbajal (CA-24)
2331 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Carbajal and Staff,

On behalf of First 5 Santa Barbara County and our Central Coast Home Visitation partners, we'd like to thank you for the time taken to meet in February and our thoughtful conversation regarding the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit and Home Visitation programs. We'd also like to thank Jesse and Ruth for their coordination efforts and for arranging our meeting.

Home visitation is a vital part of the support system for families with young children. Your willingness to engage in these conversations means a great deal to us, and we are excited to continue collaborating with you to support the families in our communities who need it most. As we discussed, we are particularly encouraged by your support for modernizing key policies that focus on child development and family well-being. Specifically, we are hopeful that you will continue to support:

1. Modernizing the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC): Expanding and improving access to this credit would significantly ease the financial burden for families, especially those in our region who rely on it to care for young children. Making child care more affordable and accessible provides young children with vital opportunities to learn and grow while strengthening family finances, supporting a thriving workforce, and boosting the economy.

2. Clarifying Guidance on Meeting the MIECHV Match: Clearer guidance on matching Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funds will help streamline implementation and ensure that our local programs can efficiently access federal resources, supporting and sustaining home visitation programs critical to early childhood development. Congress can work with HRSA to provide additional guidance about state match requirements to ensure that states are prepared and positioned to access additional dollars.

3. Prioritizing MIECHV Expansion at the Next Reauthorization: MIECHV has been a lifeline for many families in California. We strongly believe that expanding MIECHV funding during the next reauthorization is essential to maintaining and growing these critical services.

Your leadership in advocating for these issues will make a meaningful difference for families across our communities. Supporting these initiatives ensures families are supported during their children's early years so that they thrive well beyond.

We are grateful for your unwavering commitment to defending these essential programs and policies, and are proud to have you as a champion for our community. Thank you again for your time, dedication, and ongoing commitment to improving the lives of children and families in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties.

Warm regards,

Catelynn Kenner, MPH
Evaluation Manager
First 5 Santa Barbara County

Brianna Dunn, MPH
Communications Manager & PIO
First 5 Santa Barbara County

Alexis Brenner
Special Projects Coordinator
First 5 Santa Barbara County

In Partnership with our Central Coast Home Visitation Partners: