



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA APPROVES \$81.4 MILLION CONTRIBUTION TO HELP RESTORE HEALTHY FAMILIES PROGRAM'S VIABILITY

Funds could cover health care costs for more than 200,000 children ages 0-5

(Sacramento) – The First 5 California State Commission approved a contribution of up to \$81.4 million to the Healthy Families Program today to cover health care costs for more than 200,000 infants and children at risk of losing coverage due to the state's fiscal crisis. The funding, approved at a special commission meeting held earlier today, will be used to cover children ages 0-5 through June 2010.

"In the current economy, now more than ever, families rely on affordable health care to keep their children healthy and safe," said Kris Perry, executive director of First 5 California. "We encourage like-minded partners to come forward with assistance to ensure the program's survival."

The Healthy Families Program, administered by the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board (MRMIB), provides low-cost medical insurance to more than 1.1 million low-income children in families not qualified for Medi-Cal. However, the program's future has been uncertain after statewide budget cuts have left it facing a more than \$190 million shortfall.

"The availability of preventive care helps keep children out of emergency rooms and can even make a difference in how well they can perform in school," said Dave Kears, First 5 California commission vice chair. "That's why improving access to affordable children's health care has always been a part of the core mission of First 5 California."

Since voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, First 5 California has spent millions on children's health insurance – placing it among the largest and most stable funding sources of health coverage for children up to age 5 in California.

Most recently, First 5 California partnered with First 5 county commissions to provide \$16.75 million to MRMIB to pay health care premiums for children up to age 5 enrolling in the Healthy Families Program. That contribution kept 67,000 children from being placed on waiting lists for health coverage in the fiscal year ending June 30.

State Commissioners voted to approve today's contribution to MRMIB after careful consideration of First 5 California's statutory mandate and current funding commitments.

About First 5 California

First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs for expectant parents and children up to age 5. For more information, please visit first5california.com/parents.

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