



## **Memo**

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

**From:** Lauren Arzu, Program Manager (on behalf of the Administration/Finance Committee)

**Date:** October 19, 2017

**Re:** Recommendation to adopt Advocacy Policy and to make to make corresponding update to the Policy for Authority Delegated to the Executive Director

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## **Background**

With the decline in Proposition 10 revenues, threats to health care and safety net funding, and concerns related to the immigrant population, the First 5 Association along with many First 5 Commissions are taking a more active role in legislative policy and advocacy. Similarly, F5VC's FY 2015-20 Strategic Plan calls for "advocating for young children and families by building a shared vision and creating public/political will for programs for young children." Therefore, F5VC has been interested in statewide and local efforts to seek out new revenue sources to sustain and expand early childhood investments.

The Commission's current advocacy policy, which was adopted in 2006, defines the Commission's advocacy role as hosting educational forums. In July 2017, the Commission discussed the need to revise the Advocacy Policy in order to enable staff to respond to policy issues in a timely manner and directed staff to work with the Administration/Finance Committee to draft an updated policy.

In addition to discussing guidelines and parameters around advocacy activities and sharing examples of other commissions' advocacy policies during the August Administration/Finance Committee meeting, staff obtained input on the proposed policy from legal counsel.

Recognizing the often time-sensitive nature of legislative issues, the Committee felt that, with the Executive Director's expertise and knowledge of political concerns, authority should be delegated to the Executive Director to take timely, appropriate action. If a policy/legislative issue were to present a potential concern or conflict for Commissioners, the Executive Director would seek advice before taking action, either from the Chair/Co-Chair of the Commission or the Commission as a whole.

Subsequent to the approval of this proposed policy, a Policy Platform will be developed for Commission approval. The Policy Platform would be reviewed and revised as needed by the Commission on an annual basis.

## **Recommendation**

The recommendation is to adopt the proposed Advocacy Policy (Attachment 1) that establishes the criteria and a process for acting on policy matters, and grants authority to the Executive Director to engage in a variety of advocacy activities in accordance with this Policy. The recommended action will also update the Commission's policy for Authority Delegated to Executive Director (Attachment 2) accordingly.



## **POLICY FOR ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES**

### **BACKGROUND**

First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) strategic investments place greater emphasis on systems change and capacity building. The Commission's FY 2015-20 Strategic Plan calls for advocating for young children and families by building a shared vision and creating public/political will for programs for young children. This policy establishes the parameters for advocacy activities and expressly permits First 5 Ventura County to advocate for young children strategically, proactively, and in a timely manner.

### **CRITERIA FOR ENGAGING IN POLICY AND ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES**

- The Commission remains non-partisan.
- The Commission develops and endorses a Policy Platform to guide F5VC advocacy efforts and identify relevant policy areas. The Policy Platform is aligned with the following four priorities identified in the F5VC Strategic Plan:
  - Children grow up healthy
  - Children enter school ready to learn
  - Parents have the knowledge and resources they need
  - Communities are engaged in supporting and prioritizing children
- The Commission may take positions on federal, state and local policy matters, which may include legislation, regulations, local ordinances, and ballot measures, that affect:
  - Ventura County's children ages 0-5 and their families
  - F5VC's ability to work towards its mission
  - F5VC's status or its operations
- The Commission may develop positions:
  - Proactively – taking a leadership role to convene stakeholders on a policy matter
  - Reactively – responding to a proposed policy matter

### **PROCESS FOR ACTING ON POLICY MATTERS**

The Executive Director shall determine whether a policy matter is in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Policy Platform, how the issue will affect children ages 0-5 and their families, and/or First 5 Ventura County. If the policy matter is in alignment, staff shall research how similar organizations supporting young children are advocating on the issue, particularly the position being taken by the First 5 Association and First 5 California, and then the Executive Director shall determine which activities to engage in.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AUTHORITY**

The Executive Director has the authority delegated by the Commission to engage in advocacy activities, including but not limited to:

- Provide testimony at public hearings
- Provide written comments and/or letters on proposed policy matters and ballot measures
- Meet with legislators and elected officials
- Write or co-sign letters to legislators and policy makers
- Collaborate with county agencies, funders, nonprofits, etc.
- Interact with the media
- Educate the public and policymakers (trainings, white papers, educational forums)
- Develop parent leadership
- Convene experts
- Publish policy and advocacy related information on the website, in newsletters, and on social media

The Executive Director and/or the Commission Chair shall have signature authority on letters and written comments.

The Executive Director shall report on policy and advocacy actions taken at regularly scheduled Commission meetings.



## AUTHORITY DELEGATED TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director shall have delegated authority to carry-out the following responsibilities:

- Execute and administer the following types of agreements: (1) agreements that have been approved by the Commission, and (2) agreements that are within the thresholds delegated to the Executive Director for the procurement of vendors in accordance with the Commission's Procurement of Goods and Services Policies and Procedures.
  - The Executive Director, in his/her absence, may appoint a designee to approve agreements. Such delegated signature authority shall be granted in writing and for a specified time period. This authority is limited to expenditures previously authorized by the Commission, through direct funding allocations for services and/or through approved budgets.
- Approve amendments in order to complete projects, so long as any amendment does not result in additional costs for the Commission and does not extend the term of the contract by more than twelve months.
- Execute amendments related to the maximum allowable amount(s) as changes occur in IRS regulations and/or ACA (e.g., Flexible Spending (FSA) plan).
- Waive penalties, up to \$25,000, on late submission of final year-end invoices/expenditures reports received from funded partners when extenuating circumstances prevented the timely submission by the funded partner.
- At the termination of an agreement, determine whether to waive the requirement for the contractor to return any equipment, furniture, or supplies purchased with Commission funds, provided the aggregate fair market value is \$25,000 or less.
- Sign checks and approve financial transactions (e.g., wire transfers) in compliance with the Commission's internal controls for all expenditures previously approved in the budget or otherwise approved by the Commission.
- Manage all budgeted expenditures in compliance with the Commission's procurement policies, internal controls, and policy for budget management, including the authority to determine how to best allocate external funding resources to Commission initiatives in a manner that maximizes the use of funds, complies with any restricted funding requirements, and is in compliance with approved Commission budgets.
- Apply for grants and execute agreements to accept grant funding up to \$500,000, provided the grant is aligned with the strategic plan and consistent with Commission policies and the Commission Chair approves. For grants from First 5 California and upon approval by the Commission Chair, the Executive Director shall have authority to apply for and accept grants.
- Provide letters of support to partner(s) seeking grant funding, provided the project/grant is aligned with the Commission's mission.
- Engage in advocacy activities in accordance with the Commission's Policy for Advocacy Activities and the approved Policy Platform.
- Manage internal staffing and administer personnel policies in compliance with the Employee Handbook.