



To: Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

From: Lauren Arzu, Program Manager (On behalf of the Administration Finance Committee)

Date: December 12, 2019

Re: Recommendation to Adopt Policy Platform for 2020

Background

In October 2017, the Commission adopted an 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.

Over the past year, F5VC participated in a variety of advocacy activities including signing onto letters of support, meeting with legislators, participating in First 5 Association statewide advocacy activities, and educating the public and policymakers particularly through social media and e-newsletters. First 5 supported bills that were signed into law include SB 142 Workplace Lactation Accommodation, AB 1004 Developmental Screening, and SB 436 Family Resource Centers.

The First 5 Association's (F5AC) 2019 Annual Advocacy Day was particularly successful due to increased partnership with the Governor. On April 30, 2019, F5VC participated in four meetings with legislators and their staff to advocate for the Governor's proposed investments in early childhood in the state budget. During the legislative meetings, F5VC highlighted our successful Community Investment Loan Fund as a way of leveraging funding to increase the number of preschool facilities.

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.

The proposed Policy Platform updates were reviewed and approved by the Administration Finance Committee, and include additions to specifically mention Help Me Grow, Family Resource Centers, immigrant families, and the 2020 Census. The Policy Platform will be reviewed by the Commission annually and revised as needed.

Recommendation

The recommendation is to adopt the Policy Platform for 2020 (Attachment 1).



2020 POLICY PLATFORM

F5VC's Policy Priorities are aligned with the four strategic priorities and goals outlined in our 2015 – 2020 Strategic Plan. These priorities are intended to help us achieve the vision that all children thrive in healthy, supported environments.

1. Children Grow Up Healthy
 - a. Ensure all children prenatal to age 5 and their families have and utilize comprehensive health and dental insurance
 - b. Increase routine screenings for prenatal substance ~~ab~~use, developmental delays, childhood trauma, and parental mental health, and improve the system for referral and follow-up through our Help Me Grow system of care
 - c. Address the social determinants of health and pPromote general healthy practices such as good oral health, healthy eating, physical activity, and breastfeeding, and avoiding exposure to harmful substances including tobacco, marijuana, and illicit substances
2. Children Enter School Ready to Learn
 - a. Promote the importance of the early years (prenatal – age three) and early relational health including home visitation programs and developmental screenings, optimum attachment and bonding, and early literacy experiences, particularly through Family Resource Centers
 - b. Increase access to high quality early education and preschool programs for young children and their families, including through facilities, funding, and available spaces
 - c. Strengthen the compensation and professional qualification of the early childhood development and education workforce
3. Parents Have the Knowledge and Resources They Need
 - 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, and through policies promoting improved family leave, policies flexible work schedules, and employee-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. Communities are Engaged in Supporting and Prioritizing Children
 - a. Support communities to prioritize the health, education, and well-being of young children
 - b. Address and prevent childhood poverty, abuse, and neglect
 - c. Increase awareness among policymakers and business owners around the importance of investing in early childhood
 - ~~e~~.d. Ensure a complete and accurate count of children 0 – 5 in the 2020 Census