



**Executive Committee Meeting
AGENDA**

**Monday, July 29, 2024 ~ 5:00 PM
4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520
Conference Room 110 (Fishbowl)**

The Executive Committee meeting will be accessible in-person, and via virtual webinar to all members of the public. Persons who wish to address the Committee members during public comment or with respect to an item on the agenda may call in during the meeting by dialing 669-444-9171 or 669-900-6833 or use the “raise your hand” feature in the Zoom app. The Committee Chair may reduce or eliminate the amount of time allotted to read comments at the beginning of each item or public comment period depending on the number of comments and the business of the day. Your patience is appreciated

Virtual Meeting Information:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81465608572?pwd=Y8qtEUMzoyufd3x4IMU8IUeVlg4dj6.1>

Meeting ID: 886 5336 8187

Passcode: 567715

- 1.0 Convene and call to order**
- 2.0 Public Comment**
- 3.0 Approve the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meetings of May 28, 2024. Action**
- 4.0 CONSIDER accepting the report on significant program, financial or contracts matters, and on any personnel matters relating to Commission staff. Discussion**
 - 4.1** Receive updates from the Deputy Director
 - 4.2** Receive updates from the Operations Manager
 - 4.3** Receive updates from the Executive Director
 - a) Review Financial & Operations Updates.
 - b) Discuss timeline for the development of a Sustainability Plan.
 - c) Discuss Staff Retreat and Commission Retreat.
- 5.0 DISCUSS matters regarding the operation of the Commission. Discussion**
- 6.0 CONSIDER accepting the report on statewide activities pertaining to children 0-5, including the activities of the First 5 Association of California, First 5 California, and other statewide advocacy groups. Discussion**
- 7.0 REVIEW agenda items for upcoming Commission Meetings. Discussion**
- 8.0 Communications**
 - **Medi-Cal Sign-on Letter re: HAB45 June 2024**
 - **Article: “Trump and Biden dodged debate questions on soaring child-care. Families don’t have that luxury.”**
- 9.0 Adjourn**

The public may comment on any agenda item or any item of public interest within the jurisdiction of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission. In accordance with the Brown Act, if a member of the public addresses an item not on the posted agenda, no response, discussion, or action on the item may occur.

The First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities planning to participate in Commission meetings who contact the Commission’s offices, at least 48 hours before the meeting, at (925) 771-7300.

Any disclosable public records related to an open session item on a regular meeting agenda and distributed by the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission to a majority of members of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission less than 96 hours prior to that meeting are available for public inspection at 1485 Civic Court, Suite 1200, Concord, CA 94520 during normal business hours.

In consideration of those who may suffer from chemical sensitivities and may have allergic reactions to heavy scents, First 5 Contra Costa requests that staff and visitors refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or the use of strongly scented products in the work place. We thank you for your consideration of others

**Executive Committee Meeting
MINUTES**

Tuesday, May 28, 2024, 5:00-6:30pm

4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520

1.0 Convene and call to order.

Chair John Jones called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m.

In attendance: John Jones, Dr. Marla Stuart, Vidya Iyengar, Matt Regan

Absent: None

Staff present: Executive Director, Dr. Ruth Fernández; Deputy Director, Sandra Naughton; Human Resources Manager, Tammy Henry; Executive Assistant, Mikele Nelson.

2.0 Public Comment.

No public comment.

3.0 Approve the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of April 8, 2024.

Matt Regan motioned to approve the minutes of the April 8 Executive Committee meeting and Marla Stuart seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The minutes were approved.

4.0 CONSIDER accepting the report on significant program, financial or contracts matters, and on any personnel matters relating to Commission staff.

4.1 Receive highlights for the Procurement Policy Updates

Ruth Fernández presented the updates made to current Commission Procurement, Purchasing and Contracting Policies to streamline procedures and increase efficiencies to internal processes.

4.2 Receive updates from the Deputy Director

Sandra Naughton provided an update on policy advocacy, the community input and planning process for making early learning spaces more inclusive, ECE Enhanced Compensation pilot project, and other strategic projects for the upcoming months.

4.3 Receive updates from the HR Manager

Tammy Henry reported recruitment efforts for various open positions are underway.

4.4 Receive updates from the Executive Director

Ruth Fernández highlighted staffing announcements with Liliana Gonzalez becoming the new Early Childhood Program Officer and Sandra Naughton officially becoming Deputy Director after serving as interim Deputy Director for the last five months. She also noted that we are currently in recruitment for a Finance and Operations Director. She provided a fiscal update on projected revenue and expenditures through FY 26-27. She concluded by providing an overview on the revised Organization Chart with updated titles and fewer FTE's noted.

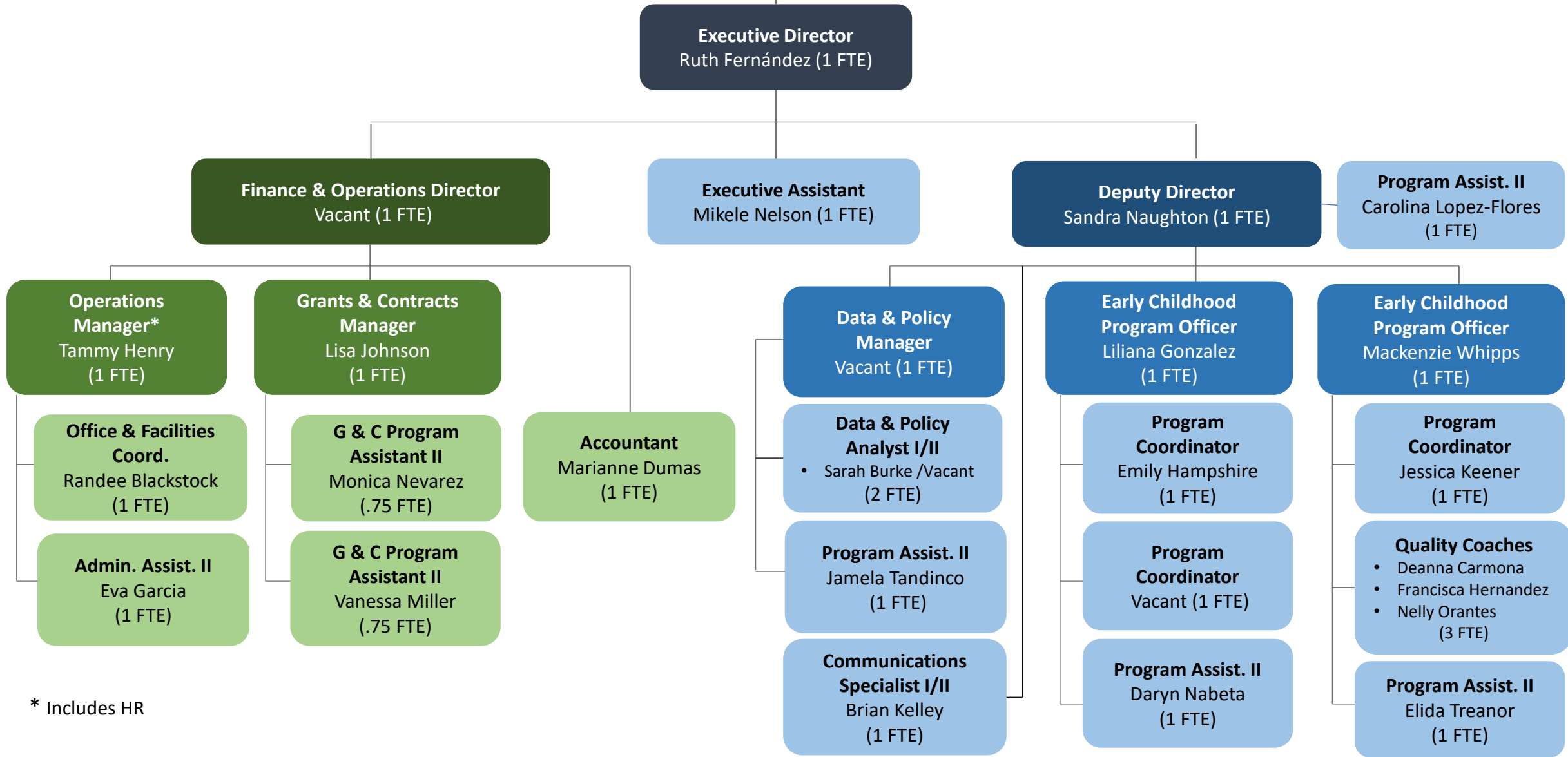
5.0 DISCUSS matters regarding the operation of the Commission

Ruth Fernández highlighted the attendance expectations for Commissioners and shared the current attendance record as well as noted the Brown Act and Teleconferencing Guidelines for attendance.

6.0 Communications

- **Bay Area First 5s Executive Directors Letter - CalAIM Section 1115 Continuous Coverage for Children**
- **AB 2982 (Reyes) - Bright Beginnings Act – Fact Sheet**
- **Assemblymember Pellerin Request Letter - First 5 Funding**

7.0 Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.



* Includes HR

**2024 Policy Priority – Sustainability and Scale
Current Advocacy and Implementation Activities / Updated July 2024**

1. Secure funding toward sustainability to both offset the impact of the Proposition 31 flavored tobacco ban and declining tobacco tax revenue.	2. Ensure that local First 5 commissions are recognized and engaged by the state as public entities, intermediaries, fiscal agents and thought partners for programs that seek to improve child and family outcomes.	3. Preserve previous state policy achievements and investments to improve child and family outcomes.	4. Leverage other health, family, and child development investments with the goal of establishing a sustainable early childhood system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ \$100M State Budget Ask ▪ \$25M Stabilization Fund proposal to First 5 California 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing conversations with State to leverage, streamline, and align existing funding streams to F5s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>HHS Secretary Mark Ghaly and deputy secretaries</i> ○ <i>Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative</i> ○ <i>First 5 California SPCFA</i> ▪ Medi-Cal Learning Community and work with First 5s on Managed Care Plan MOUs (Center) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defending budget cuts to Home Visiting, child care, and developmental services ▪ Continuous Medi-Cal Coverage for 0-5 ▪ Implementation of MHSA reforms at the local level (Tracking) ▪ Work with Whole Child Equity Partnership and Community Health Worker Medi-Cal benefit implementation (Center) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AB 2982 — establishing a Prenatal to Three workgroup that uplifts the value, expertise, and implementation power of the F5 County Network ▪ Partnering with the Whole Child Equity Partnership ▪ Medi-Cal Learning Community and work with First 5s on Managed Care Plan MOUs (Center)

2024 Budget Agreement

The 2024 Budget agreement between the Governor, the Senate, and the Assembly puts the state on a more fiscally responsible long-term path that protects vital programs assisting millions of Californians.

The agreement maintains the multi-year fiscal structure of the May Revision, solving for budget deficits not only for the budget year—but also for the fiscal year that follows, 2025-26.

The agreement includes commitments to support further budget resilience. Part of the agreement proposes additional legislation requiring the state to set aside a portion of anticipated surplus funds to be allocated in a subsequent budget act—adding further fiscal protection so that the state does not commit certain amounts of future anticipated revenues until those revenues have been realized.

The agreement also includes a trigger to implement the healthcare worker minimum wage increases pursuant to Senate Bill 525 and statutory changes to exempt state facilities and other implementation clarifications.

Topline Numbers:

Expenditures—The agreement includes total expenditures of \$297.9 billion all funds, of which \$211.5 billion is General Fund.

Special Fund for Economic Uncertainties (SFEU)—The SFEU is balanced over the next two fiscal years with positive balances of \$3.5 billion in 2024-25 and \$1.5 billion in 2025-26.

Reserves—The agreement assumes withdrawals from the Budget Stabilization Account (Rainy Day Fund) over the next two fiscal years, using \$5.1 billion in 2024-25 and \$7.1 billion in 2025-26, preserving budget resilience by maintaining \$22.2 billion in total reserves at the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Proposition 98—Funds the minimum guarantee at \$115.3 billion (\$82.6 billion General Fund) for the budget year for Pre-K-12 schools and community colleges—maintaining education programs and mitigating reductions in the classroom.

- 2024-25 per pupil spending: \$18,399 Proposition 98 / \$24,313 all funds

Solutions:

The agreement solves a \$46.8 billion deficit for the budget year through a mix of broad-based solutions.

Reductions—\$16.0 billion. The agreement reduces funding for various items. Significant solutions in this category include:

- **Ongoing Reductions to State Operations**—A reduction to state operations by approximately 7.95 percent beginning in 2024-25 to nearly all department budgets. The reduction involves all categories, including personnel, operating costs and contracting for savings of \$2.17 billion General Fund.
- **Vacant Position Sweep**—Permanently reduce \$1.5 billion (\$762.5 million General Fund) in 2024-25 by reducing departments' budgets for vacant positions.
- **California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation**—A reduction of \$358 million above the statewide reductions (state operations and vacant positions), for a total of \$750 million in the budget window.
- **California Student Housing Revolving Loan Program**—A reduction of \$500 million.
- **Learning Aligned Employment Program**—A reduction of \$485 million one-time, which reflects the balance of unspent one-time Learning-Aligned Employment Program resources.
- **Middle Class Scholarship Program**—A reduction of \$110 million ongoing beginning in 2025-26.
- **Housing**—A reduction of \$1.1 billion to various affordable housing programs.
- **Healthcare Workforce**—A reduction of \$746.1 million for various healthcare workforce programs.
- **Reductions of State and Local Public Health**—Reverts \$41.5 million one time in the current year and ongoing savings of \$8 million State Public Health and \$15.9 million Local Public Health, which aligns with all other state 7.95-percent efficiency reductions.
- **Revenue/Internal Borrowing—\$13.6 billion.** The agreement includes additional revenue sources and borrows internally from special funds. Significant solutions in this category include:

- **Net Operating Loss (NOL) Suspension/Credit Limitation**—Suspends NOL for companies with over \$1 million in taxable income and limits business tax credits to \$5 million in 2024, 2025, and 2026 which increases revenues \$5.95 billion, \$5.5 billion, and \$3.4 billion, in fiscal years 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27 respectively. The proposal includes a refundability component to ensure taxpayers subject to the temporary credit limitation can fully utilize their credits after the limitation period ends.
- **Additional Managed Care Organization (MCO) Tax Amendment (Medicare Revenue)**—Increases the MCO Tax to achieve additional net state benefit of nearly \$1.8 billion in 2024-25, \$1.9 billion in 2025-26, and \$1.4 billion in 2026-27 by including health plan Medicare revenue in the total revenue limit calculation, which increases the allowable size of the tax.

Reserves—\$6.0 billion. The agreement withdraws \$12.2 billion from the Budget Stabilization Account (Rainy Day Fund) over the next two fiscal years—\$5.1 billion in 2024-25 and \$7.1 billion in 2025-26 and \$900 million from the Safety Net Reserve in 2024-25.

Fund Shifts—\$6.0 billion. The agreement shifts certain expenditures from the General Fund to other funds. Significant solutions in this category include:

- **Proposition 2 Supplemental Payment**—Applies a prior CalPERS Supplemental Pension Payment to the state's overall pension liability to reduce the required employer contributions in 2024-25 by \$1.7 billion (\$1.3 billion General Fund).
- **Formula and Competitive Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program**—Shifts \$958 million General Fund from current year and budget year to Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.
- **Clean Energy and Other Climate Programs**—Shifts \$3 billion from current year and budget year General Fund to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.

Delays and Pauses—\$3.1 billion. The agreement minimizes the use of delays to avoid both increased future obligations and potential shortfalls. These include:

- **California Food Assistance Program Expansion**—Delays for two years the California Food Assistance Program expansion automation to begin in 2026-27 with benefits beginning in 2027-28.

- **Department of Developmental Services Provider Pay Delay**—Delays implementation of increased provider pay by six months to January 1, 2025.
- **Child Care Slots**—Funds approximately 11,000 new slots that received tentative awards and pauses additional expansion slots by two years (2026-27). After two years, additional slots are subject to Budget Act appropriation.
- **Broadband Last Mile**—Delays \$550 million to 2027-28.

Deferrals—\$2.1 billion. The agreement defers certain payments to later years. These include:

- **Payroll Deferral**—Defers \$3.2 billion (\$1.6 billion General Fund) for one month of state employees' payroll costs.
- **UC/CSU Compact Deferral**—Defers \$524 million from 2025-26 to 2026-27 and from 2026-27 to 2027-28.

Maintains Core Programs:

The agreement maintains core programs serving millions of California's most vulnerable populations.

Proposition 98—Protects education now and in the future. Funds the minimum guarantee at \$115.3 billion (\$82.6 billion General Fund) for the budget year for Pre-K-12 schools and community colleges.

Medi-Cal—Maintains funding for the expansion of health care to all income eligible Californians regardless of immigration status, inclusive of In-Home Supportive Services.

Behavioral Health—Largely preserves funding across multiple programs supporting the expansion of the continuum of behavioral health treatment and infrastructure capacity for providing behavioral health services to children and youth (\$7.1 billion total funds).

Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment (SSI/SSP) base grants—Maintains a 3.2-percent federal SSI cost-of-living adjustment and maintains the 9.2-percent SSP increase, which took effect on January 1, 2024. These adjustments raise the maximum SSI/SSP grant levels to \$1,183 per month for individuals and \$2,023 per month for couples.

CalWORKs base grants—Maintains a cumulative 31.3-percent increase in CalWORKs Maximum Aid Payment levels since 2021.

In-Home Supportive Services—Maintains benefits levels, including those provided to individuals regardless of their immigration status.

Broadband Middle and Last Mile—Preserves \$250 million for the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative in 2024-25 and allows the Director of Finance to augment the budget for an additional \$250 million with concurrence from the Legislature. Additionally, preserves \$2 billion for Last Mile projects over the multiyear in order to connect unserved and underserved communities to broadband service.

Continuing Priorities:

The agreement includes continued investments in vital programs.

Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention Program—\$1 billion one time to provide local governments funding to combat the homelessness crisis—tied to increased accountability measures.

Encampment Grants—\$250 million (\$150 million in 2024-25 and \$100 million in 2025-26).

Managed Care Tax Investments—Includes \$133 million in 2024-25, \$728 million in 2025-26, and \$1.2 billion in 2026-27 for increases and investments in the Medi-Cal program.

SUN Bucks (Formerly Summer EBT)—\$146.8 million (\$73.4 million General Fund) for outreach, automation, and administration to allow California to provide an estimated \$1 billion in 2024-25 in federal food assistance. SUN Bucks provides \$40 per month for food in June, July and August (\$120 total).

Victims Assistance Grants/backfill of federal VOCA funds—\$103 million one time.

Nonprofit Security Grants—\$80 million annually for two years.

Foster Care Rates—\$20.5 million (\$13.3 million General Fund) to begin automation for updated foster care rates. Implementation of the new foster care rates will begin in 2027-28.



Commission Administrative Calendar

Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025

Month/Meeting	Date	Time	Bylaws required	Staff Calendared
July/August 2024				
Executive Committee Meeting	July 29th	5:00 – 6:30 PM	Submit F5CA Certificate of Compliance	Staffing Recruitment Update Consolidated Financial Policies Overview Sustainability Plan Timeline Staff and Commission Retreats
Full Commission Meeting	Aug 12th	6:00 – 8:00 PM	None	Ready Kids East County Presentation Completion of CCC Triennial Report
September/October 2024				
Executive Committee Meeting	Sept 30th	5:00 – 6:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Process for Nomination of 2025 Commission Officers 	Financial Report per End of Fiscal Year
Full Commission Meeting	Oct 14th	6:00 – 8:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select Ad Hoc Nominating Committee Accept 4th Quarter Financials & End of Year Financial Report FY23/24 Approve 2025 Premium Contribution Rates for Health & Dental Benefits Public Hearing: 2023/24 2022/23 Annual Audit Report Public Hearing: F5CC Annual State Report 	First 5 Parent Advisory Board Update First 5 Regional Groups Report Program Updates Organizational Updates
December 2024				
Executive Committee Meeting	Dec 2 nd	5:00 – 6:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update report from Nominating Committee 	Review Commission Meeting Calendar First 5 Association Summit
Full Commission Meeting	Dec 18 th	6:00 -8:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve 2025 Slate of Officers - action Approve 2025 Meeting Calendar - action Accept Year In Review Presentation Approve 24/25 F5CC Employee Compensation & Benefits Resolution Accept 1st Quarter Financial Report FY24/25 	Progress on staff Working Groups Fiscal Forecast Celebration and Staff Milestones Recognition ED Updates



Commission Administrative Calendar

Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025

Jan/Feb 2025				
Executive Committee Meeting	TBD	5:00 – 6:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closed Session – ED Performance Review 	General Staff Updates Advocacy Day Registration and Activities
Full Commission Meeting	TBD	6:00 – 8:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Counsel Presentation of Conflict of Interest Code Completion of Form 700 Requirement Accept 2nd Quarter Financial Report FY24/25 	ED Updates
Mar/April 2025				
Executive Committee Meeting	TBD	5:00 – 6:30 PM		Overview of FY25/26 Budget Presentation of Long-Term Sustainability Plan
Full Commission Meeting	TBD	6:00 – 8:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Hearing: F5 CA Annual Report Approve Budget for FY 25/26 Approve Long-Term Sustainability Plan 	ED Updates Other Staff Updates
May/June 2025				
Executive Committee Meeting	TBD	5:00 – 6:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit Engagement Letter sent to Commissioners. Discuss updates on F5CC 2025-2026 Strategic Plan & Long-Term Financial Plan 	Start External Audit Process of Prior Year
Full Commission Meeting	TBD	6:00 – 8:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve FY 25/26 contracts Approve Certificate of Compliance Report to F5 CA Public Hearing: F5 Contra Costa Strategic Plan and Long-Term Financial Plan for FY 2024-2026 Updates/Progress Accept 3rd Quarter Financial Report FY 24/25 ACCEPT presentations from the First 5 Centers' Community Advisory Councils about their local recommendations for the Center and the community 	ED Updates Strategic Plan Updates



Commission Administrative Calendar

Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025

Overview of First 5 Contra Costa Key Compliance Activities

- Public Hearing on Annual Audit (typically conducted October of each year)
- Public Hearing on Annual State Report (typically conducted October of each year)
- Review of Progress toward Goals and Objectives – Local Community Dashboard Report (typically conducted December of each year – also known as Year-In Report)
- Approval of Budget (typically conducted April of each year)
- Public Hearing, Update, Review, and/or Adoption of First 5 Contra Costa Strategic Plan (typically done April of each year)
- Public Hearing on First 5 California Annual Report (typically done April of each year)

June 13, 2024

To: Governor Gavin Newsom, Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas

CC: Senator Steve Glazer, Senator Nancy Skinner, Senator Bill Dodd, Assemblymember Lori Wilson, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, Assemblymember Tim Grayson, Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan

To our state budget leaders and Contra Costa representatives:

We are writing to you as concerned service providers and advocates for young children's health and development.

Continuous health coverage is critical for families with young children, and allows them to stay on top of regular check-ups and screenings, recommended vaccinations, and life-saving medication. Unfortunately, over 300,000 children in California have lost their Medi-Cal coverage in the past year due to the requirement of confirming their eligibility for Medi-Cal coverage.

Mail errors, confusing paperwork, and long wait times for support mean that even children who are eligible for Medi-Cal have lost their coverage and missed out on vital health care. Here in Contra Costa County, health care providers are seeing patients "disappear" and are concerned that they're not getting the care they need. Early childhood providers are hearing from stressed-out and concerned parents, who don't know how to get the help they need. And community partners who provide enrollment assistance are overburdened, scrambling to provide support without sufficient staff or resources.

We are calling on you to implement a simple, cost-effective solution: In 2022, California made a bold step toward protecting low-income children's health by committing to continuous Medi-Cal enrollment from birth through five years of age. We need our state leaders to include funding to fulfill this commitment and keep hundreds of thousands of children insured. Please fund continuous Medi-Cal coverage this year, and join us in supporting the health and development of California's youngest residents.

Sincerely,

Healthy & Active Before 5
CocoKids
First 5 Contra Costa
Comment Studio
Contra Costa Crisis Center
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Healthy Contra Costa

Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra Costa County



Healthy + Active
Before 5



Healthy
Contra Costa



CHILD ABUSE
PREVENTION
COUNCIL *of*
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Trump and Biden dodged debate questions on soaring child-care costs. Families don't have that luxury.

Published: June 28, 2024 at 3:01 p.m. ET

By

[Venessa Wong](#)

Follow

Parents 'are frankly pissed off and anxious about what the future looks like, and that's what was so disappointing about last night'



Parent groups are “turning away with disgust” after Trump and Biden both ignored a question about how they would make child care more affordable during the first presidential debate.

Former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden both sidestepped a question about how they would make child care more affordable during Thursday night's presidential debate, despite [strong agreement](#) among both Republicans and Democrats that “being a parent today is financially harder than ever before.”

The candidates' silence on child-care costs left advocates frustrated. “We are frankly pissed off and anxious about what the future looks like, and that's what was so disappointing about last night,” Keri Rodrigues, president of the National Parents Union — a group of 1,700 parent organizations that was founded in 2020 — told MarketWatch. “Both candidates were just embarrassingly short on any specific policy details, and that's really what we need to hear right now. There's a lot at stake.”

Families are not only struggling with child-care costs, but they're also coping with debt, healthcare costs and underfunded schools, Rodrigues noted. There are families who “are never going to get access to economic mobility,” she said. “This is, I think, part of the reason why some [parents] are just

turning away with disgust,” she added, referring to people who aren’t excited to vote for either candidate.

For families with at least two children, child care is now [more expensive than rent](#) or a mortgage payment in most of the U.S. In response to a debate question about how he would make child-care costs more affordable, Trump used his time instead to address an unrelated topic – defending his choice to fire his former White House chief of staff, John Kelly, who had confirmed that Trump had [made disparaging remarks about service members and veterans](#).

Biden then used his time to say that the U.S. is still “the most admired country in the world” and to call Trump the worst president in American history, before adding: “He did very – virtually nothing to child care. We should significantly increase the child-care tax credit. We should significantly increase the availability of women and men for child or single parents to be able to go back to work, and we should encourage businesses to hold – to have child-care facilities.” Biden’s microphone was cut off at that point due to the debate’s time constraints.

The absence of a robust child-care discussion during the debate was a “missed opportunity” to articulate solutions, said Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, executive director and chief executive of MomsRising. She added that “the Biden-Harris administration – and Democrats in Congress – have worked tirelessly to make quality, affordable care available to many more people, while the Trump administration did not.”

The Biden and Trump campaigns did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Child-care costs are rising faster than inflation and income

Neither candidate laid out their plans about an issue that costs many families more than their housing. Child-care prices rose 210% [from 1990 to 2019](#) – faster than consumer prices overall, and faster than median family incomes, according to a [2023 White House report](#). It noted that households that pay for child care spend approximately [13% of their income on it](#), about twice the 7% rate that the federal government considers to be “affordable.” Low-income families spend an even greater 30% of their income on child care.

Meanwhile, the [median annual earnings of child-care workers is \\$30,300](#), according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Child-care advocates have urged for more public spending on child care to make it more accessible for families while also boosting pay for these workers.

“Child care is a priority issue for families across the country,” Susan Gale Perry, chief executive of Child Care Aware of America – which published [the report on child-care costs compared to rent](#) – told MarketWatch. “Voters want a plan, and they want action, to make America’s child care strong. I don’t think they heard that last night.”

Another advocate, Reshma Saujani, founder and chief executive of Moms First, said in a statement: “Moms First is disappointed that our presidential candidates failed to acknowledge the seriousness of our child-care crisis and its impact on American mothers.” Moms First had launched a [petition requesting that CNN ask about child care](#) during the debate that received 15,000 signatures.

Parents are motivated to be a united voting bloc

Despite parents sharing many similar concerns and American families being a primary focus of political rhetoric, they have not behaved as a voting bloc. In a 2023 survey, Pew Research Center found that compared to people without kids, “at all age levels, [parents are more Republican-oriented](#).” However, [QC Roll Call reported in 2022](#) that “having a child is not a clear, determinative predictor of which party someone is going to vote for in the way that gender is,” with women more likely to vote for Democrats and men more likely to vote for Republicans.

But this may change as groups organize around issues impacting families and parents. “Parents are active and motivated to be participating as a united bloc” politically, said Rodrigues, president of the National Parents Union. She noted that over the last five years, she has taken thousands of parents to Washington to have their voices heard. “We’ve moved way past the PTA and bake sales,” she said. “Parents are making time to participate in politics.”

“As candidates vie for votes this election season, they should not underestimate the power of moms,” Moms First’s Saujani said. “We are a powerful constituency that cannot be ignored. And we deserve real, substantive solutions to this crisis.”

MarketWatch wants to hear from readers. What are your most pressing family-finance challenges and questions? Please fill out [this form](#) and a reporter may reach out to you for an article. If you’d prefer to share your story by email, you may also write to readerstories@marketwatch.com.