



2024 POLICY AGENDA TO ADVANCE EQUITY



► **At First 5 Alameda County our “North Star,” the population result that guides our work, is that all children are ready for kindergarten. Our work is to ensure that policies, systems, communities, and schools support families and children by creating the conditions that position all for success.**

Our policy strategy utilizes analysis, data, information, and coalitions to support the evolution of an equity-centered local early childhood system. We engage in advocacy under the areas of — Neighborhoods, Family, Health & Well-Being, and Learning & Care—to scale and sustain effective programs and to promote public policies grounded in equity and justice. We are guided by a **whole community, whole family, whole child approach** that works at the intersection of racial, economic, climate, housing, and health justice to ensure that policies support the conditions children, families, and communities need to thrive.

Now is the time to invest in state and federal long-term, systemic solutions for children and families. Families and communities need comprehensive supports that bolster the health, well-being, and development of young children. We recognize that First 5 Alameda County is in a unique position with growth opportunities, while First 5 agencies across the state are facing declining tobacco tax revenues leading to layoffs and program cuts. This revenue is crucial to local First 5s' infrastructure and ability to cultivate effective early childhood systems of care across the State. That is why we support statewide efforts to strengthen the stability of First 5 agencies and advance the coordination of early childhood systems to meet the ongoing needs of families with young children.

► **At a Glance: First 5 Alameda County Policy Priorities**

First 5 Alameda County works to advance county, state, and federal policies through budgetary, legislative, and administrative advocacy to cultivate an equity-centered local early childhood system of care that prepares and supports children, families, and communities so that children are ready for kindergarten. We believe our policy agenda is most effective when it is co-created with community and used to support community-driven efforts.

Our 2024 Policy Agenda is shaped by our programmatic areas, partnerships, and the findings and recommendations from our most recent studies and research including the:

- [2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment \(KRA\) study](#)
- [2022 Alameda County Early Care and Education Licensed Facilities Needs Assessment](#)
- [2023 Early Childhood Education Workforce Task Force](#)

First 5 uses these findings and recommendations to shape a policy strategy that prepares and supports children, families, and communities in addressing inequities and disparities that have been exacerbated by decades of disinvestment and a fragmented early childhood system.

AT FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY, WE ADVOCATE FOR AND INVEST IN:

► Financial Stability

Policies and programs acknowledge the strain low-income and working families experience and guarantee families have a right to sufficient income and supports to ensure families can meet their basic needs and create a safe, healthy, and enriching home environment.

► Coordinated Systems

Now is the time to imagine, co-create, and build coordinated systems of services and resources that support the health and well-being of families by ensuring access to services.

► Community Leadership

Policies are most effective when developed with family and community lived experience, voice, leadership, and decision-making power.

► Thriving Neighborhoods

Children thrive when neighborhoods have community-driven place-based investments and equitable economic development opportunities that address structural racism that has resulted in disproportionate rates of poverty.

► Access & Quality

Increase awareness and access to quality early care and education options offered through a diverse mixed-delivery system. Strengthen learning and care opportunities for infants and toddlers and expand the infrastructure of care through expanded facilities and technology to support connection to care.

► Workforce

Support policies and practices that stabilize, strengthen, and expand the diverse early care and education workforce through livable wages, safe and supportive workplaces, access to professional development, and health and well-being benefits.

► Local Investments

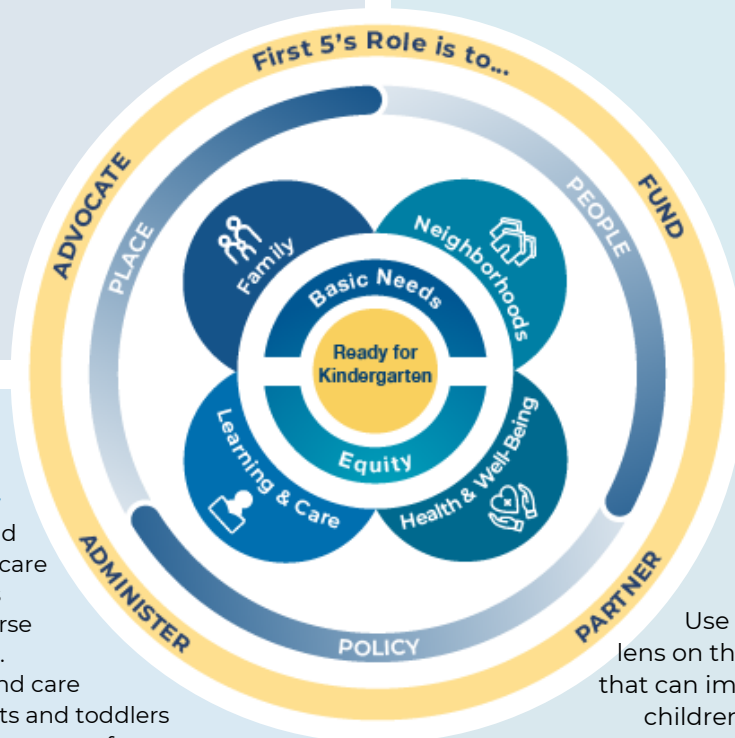
Partner with public systems and community to prepare the early care and education system for broad investment through dedicated local funding streams for families with young children.

► Whole Community, Whole Family, Whole Child

Use a holistic and equitable lens on the policies and practices that can improve the well-being of children, their families, and the communities they live in.

► Birth Equity & Reproductive Justice

Promote strategies, programs, and policies that protect the right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, and safe and healthy pregnancies and birth outcomes for Black women/birthing people and their babies.



FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY POLICY PRIORITIES



NEIGHBORHOODS

► COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Policies are most effective when developed with family and community lived experience, voice, leadership, and decision-making power.

Community Voice & Vitality

Invest in parent/caregiver and community capital and strengths. Create policies and county-wide programs that honor the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); families with low incomes; refugees; undocumented families; LGBTQ+ families, and unhoused families.

Father & Father Figure Engagement

Promote the adoption and integration of the Father-Friendly Principles, Healthy Relationship Principles, and father and father figure specific services across community programs and public systems.

Community-Centered Data & Research

Support policies and practices that recognize families and communities as conveners, storytellers, and owners of data in the work to advance data-driven decision-making.

Parent & Caregiver Leadership

Advance parent and community participation in policy development, program design, research, evaluation, and data; and ensure providers and community partners are properly resourced to equitably compensate parent and caregiver leadership and engagement. Promote the inclusion of historically underrepresented family members in programs and services.

► THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

Children thrive when neighborhoods have community-driven, place-based investments and equitable economic development opportunities that address structural racism that has resulted in disproportionate rates of poverty.

Neighborhoods Ready for School

Partner with Neighborhoods Ready for School grantees, community partners, and local government to advance community driven place-based strategies, like Family Resource Centers, that support the multi-generational needs of families, support cross system service coordination, and inform policy advocacy and service delivery.

Family Friendly Communities

Increase investments in a sustainable built environment and public infrastructure to address equitable access to public transportation, affordable housing, safe parks and green spaces, free and affordable recreation activities, promotion of eco-friendly land use and development, and support community and public safety.

Equitable Community Economic Development

Support policies and programs that increase job creation and workforce development with living wages, support for small businesses, and promote the use of public funds to provide economic opportunities for neighborhood residents. Disrupt and mitigate the impacts of gentrification, climate change, and extractive and exploitive economic policies in BIPOC communities.





► **FINANCIAL STABILITY**

Policies and programs acknowledge the strain low-income and working families experience, and guarantee families have a right to sufficient income and supports to ensure families can meet their basic needs and create a safe, healthy, and enriching home environment.

Income & Basic Needs

Scale policies and programs that advance economic justice and increase economic supports for families such as Universal Basic Income, improvements to the public safety net, rental, utility, and transportation assistance, apprenticeships, and free and affordable secondary and technical education.

Digital Equity

Increase equitable access to reliable, high-speed internet, devices to facilitate learning and economic development, and digital literacy supports.

Asset Building, Debt Relief & Credit Building

Support policies and programs that promote families' multi-generational financial stability and economic mobility such as college savings programs and fair credit and lending practices.

Housing

Partner with community, private, and public partners to increase supports for unhoused pregnant people and families. Protect and increase the supply and access of affordable and family friendly housing options.

► COORDINATED SYSTEMS

Now is the time to imagine, co-create, and build coordinated systems of services and resources that support the health and well-being of families by ensuring awareness and accessibility to culturally and linguistically responsive services that mitigate childhood adversity and support the diversity of needs of young children including physical, social, and other special needs.

Statewide Systems Reform

Ensure equitable implementation of policies, access to programs, and expansion of workforce development strategies that promote child and family health and well-being (e.g., new Doula and Community Health Worker benefits under CalAIM, Medi-Cal redetermination, workforce compensation, community-based mental health services for children and families, and elimination of administrative barriers).

Child Welfare System

Advocate for systems that support children as well as support families. Advance system practices that promote prevention and reunification and anti-racist/classist practices that improve family and child outcomes.

Early Identification (Screening), Care Coordination & Family Navigation

Scale and sustain strategies that address the physical, behavioral, developmental, dental, and social determinants through screenings, well-child visits, child development education, and family supports. Scale programs like DULCE, Family Resource Centers, and care management through Help Me Grow and pediatric practices.

Incarcerated Families

Advance policies that support children and families impacted by parental incarceration and increase reentry resources for families with young children including increasing supports to help families stay connected like eliminating the cost of phone calls for families impacted by the justice system.





HEALTH & WELL-BEING

► **WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE FAMILY, WHOLE CHILD**

Use a holistic and equitable lens on the policies and practices that can improve the well-being of children, their families, and the communities they live in.

Care for Communities

Ensure that the physical and mental health, and social drivers needs of children, families, and communities are met with culturally and linguistically accessible services.

Workforce

Promote workforce strategies to grow, support, and diversify community and family-serving health workforce, e.g., nurses, physician assistants, doulas, promotoras, community health workers, peer supporters, and mental health workers.

Community Partnerships

Advance local strategies to ensure availability and accessibility of affordable, racially concordant, and culturally responsive care coordination and mental health service and supports.

Food as Care

Advocate for improved communities' and families' access to healthy, culturally appropriate, and affordable food. Address administrative barriers to food and nutrition programs, offer technical assistance, and increase reimbursement rates for meals offered in early care and education settings.

► BIRTH EQUITY & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Promote strategies, programs, and policies that protect the right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, and safe and healthy pregnancies and birth outcomes for Black women/birthing people and their babies.

Local implementation

Partner locally to support the implementation of new state and federal policies that aim to advance birth equity and reproductive justice, including Universal Basic Income, access to comprehensive perinatal and postpartum care, full spectrum doula supports, group prenatal care, continuous Medi-Cal eligibility for children 0-5, collection and analysis of data related to birth disparities and related research, and workforce opportunities for BIPOC people in the health field.

Advocacy

Engage state and federal agencies and elected officials about the important role of birth equity to advance racial and economic justice. Advance policies and programs that address racism as the root cause in adverse pregnancy and birth outcomes for Black women and birthing people.





LEARNING & CARE

► ACCESS & QUALITY

Increase awareness and access to quality early care and education options offered through a diverse mixed-delivery system that builds on each child's unique individual and family strengths, cultural background, language(s), abilities, and experiences. Strengthen learning and care opportunities for infants and toddlers and expand the infrastructure of care through expanded facilities and technology to support connection to care.

Kindergarten Transitions

Expand access to kindergarten readiness activities and transition supports that are accessible to all families within their community, including resources for license exempt care such as family, friend, and neighbor providers.

Mental Health Consultation

Increase access to affordable, quality mental health and self-care resources for early care and education (ECE) professionals and educators in addition to classroom-based mental health supports for children.

► **WORKFORCE**

Support policies and practices that strengthen the diverse early care and education workforce through livable wages, safe and supportive workplaces, access to professional development, and health and well-being benefits.

Early Childhood Apprenticeship

Promote workforce strategies to grow, support, and diversify community and family-serving health workforce (e.g., nurses, physician assistants, doulas, promotoras, community health workers, peer supporters, and mental health workers).

Learning & Professional Development

Advance policies and practices that support the diverse needs of the workforce and promote quality practices such as reflective supervision for professionals working with children and families, coaching and mentoring programs, and scholarships for apprentices to obtain permits, AAs, BAs, graduate degrees.

Quality Jobs & Well-Being

Advance policies that support fair compensation, opportunities for career advancement, professional development, a supportive work environment, and a reasonable workload for ECE educators. Increase access to well-being programming and activities (e.g., physical therapy, mental health, stress management, etc.) to support their overall health and job satisfaction.

► **LOCAL INVESTMENTS**

Partner with public systems, providers, and community to prepare the early care and education system for broad investment through dedicated local funding streams for families with young children.

- Support improved access, enrollment, and experience through robust and coordinated family navigation, data, and technology systems.
- Advocate for a spectrum of asset building strategies to support licensed child care businesses including capital investments in renovation, repair, expansion and new constructions of facilities; co-location of child care facilities with new housing developments; and targeted strategies to improve the long-term financial well-being of the ECE community.
- Advance policies and practices that promote cross-system communication, collaboration and partnerships between the home, informal care settings, early care and education professionals, community programs, and schools.

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