



A public entity funded from Proposition 10 tobacco tax funds

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First 5 Riverside Helps Provide Funding Solution to Avert Children's Health Care Crisis

(JANUARY 15, 2009) RIVERSIDE, CA — First 5 Riverside, the Riverside County Children & Families Commission approved up to \$1.4 million in funding today to keep local children through age 5 from being placed on a wait list for health coverage.

The funding is part of a \$16.7 million joint initiative between First 5 California and First 5 commissions throughout the state to provide immediate relief for infants and young children, who would have been denied health coverage because of the state's budget crisis.

“During this period of rising unemployment and economic instability, it is important now more than ever to collaborate and make health coverage accessible and affordable to our most vulnerable children,” said Harry Freedman, First 5 Riverside's executive director.

First 5 Riverside's contribution will pay health care premiums for new applicants to the state-run Healthy Families program until the end of June.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger; Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg; Assembly Speaker Karen Bass; and Lesley Cummings, director of the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board, which administers the Healthy Families program, have all expressed public support of First 5's funding solution.

Health care access has long been a priority for First 5 Riverside, which currently funds a Children's Health Initiative called Healthy Kids through Inland Empire Health Plan. The program provides affordable and comprehensive healthcare coverage to Riverside County children whose families do not qualify for existing programs such as the state's Healthy Families program. This fiscal year, \$2.5 million has been allocated for this initiative.

First 5 Riverside, the Riverside County Children & Families Commission, is a public entity funded by Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues and established by the County Board of Supervisors in 1999. First 5 Riverside provides funding of early education, health and child care services that help children through age 5 develop a strong foundation for success in school and throughout their lives. For more information about First 5 Riverside programs and other funded services, call 951-248-0014 or Toll Free 800-266-3880 or visit www.rccfc.org.