



SYSTEMS OPTIMIZATION & SUSTAINABILITY (SOS) COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Date: December 17, 2025, Time: 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Commission Members: Érik Fernández y Garcia (Chair), Eric Guerra, LaWanda Wesley

Advisory Committee Member(s): Carolyn Curtis, Heidi Keiser *Alternates:* Kairis Chiaji, Darsey Varnedoe

Staff: Julie Gallelo, Erin Maurie, Maria Hammill

This is an In-Person Meeting for Committee Members

Location: First 5 Sacramento, 2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 330 Sacramento, CA 95833.

Community/Public May Join by Zoom: <https://saccounty-net.zoomgov.com/j/1604906603?pwd=xpoZgo4GF5DYXQuN4HvY6q5q68vYge.1>

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Public Comment on Off-Agenda Items
3. Approve Minutes for October 22, 2025
4. Policy and Advocacy Activities
 - Discuss and Approve 2026 Policy Priorities
 - First 5 Association Policy Summit
 - Federal Bill HR.1 Impacts
5. Equity In Action Committee Update: REDI Grants
6. Committee Member Comments
7. Future Agenda Items: Next Meeting February 18, 2026
8. Adjourn

If there is a need for an accommodation pursuant to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), medical reasons or for other needs, please contact First 5 staff at First5sac@saccounty.gov and CA Relay Services 711 (for the hearing impaired).

SYSTEMS OPTIMIZATION & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes

October 22, 2025: 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Members: Érik Fernández y García, LaWanda Wesley (Chair), Eric Guerra
Advisory Committee Member(s): Carolyn Curtis, Heidi Keiser *Alternates:* Kairis Chaiji, Darsey Varnedoe
Staff: Julie Gallelo, Erin Maurie, Maria Hammill

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:15 a.m. A quorum was established. Present: LaWanda Wesley, Heidi Keiser, and Darsey Varnedoe. Érik Fernández y García and Carolyn Curtis attended via zoom and were unable to vote.

2. Public Comment on Off-Agenda Items

None.

3. Approve Draft Minutes for August 20, 2025

Moved by Darsey Varnedoe and seconded by Heidi Keiser. Item approved.

4. Policy and Advocacy Activities

Erin Maurie provided a legislative update on the bills the Governor signed and bills held back. The news of the SNAP/CalFresh benefits being cancelled from the federal shutdown was announced that morning. The committee spent time brainstorming outreach efforts to support our funded partners with food resources for the families they serve.

5. Equity In Action Committee Update: REDI Grants

The request for Letters of Interest was released on September 19th with a due date on October 9th. We received 407 Letters of Interest totaling over \$62 million in funding requests. The Committee reviewed letter submissions and invited 61 applicants to apply. Approved applications for funding will be announced on December 15th and added to the January Commission meeting agenda for approval.

6. Presentation: Help Me Grow (HMG)

Christine Smith, Early Learning Director at the Sacramento Office of Education, provided an update on the HMG program. HMG provides developmental and

behavioral screenings and program referrals. HMG oversees a large collaboration with organizations that provided family services, assessments and intervention.

7. Mental Health Centers at Schools: Update from the Sacramento Office of Education (SCOE)

Christine Smith, Early Learning Director at the Sacramento Office of Education, provided an update on school based mental health and increased student need for this service. The program hires clinicians to provide direct mental health services to students.

8. Approve 2026 Meeting Dates/Time and Discuss Chair and Vice Chair

The 2026 meeting dates remained the same time and date, and the committee agreed to continue with rotating the Chair for each meeting between the commissioners.

9. Committee Member Comments

No comments.

10. Future Agenda Items

Discuss Federal Bill HR.1

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Erin Maurie, Communications and Policy Director
First 5 Sacramento Commission

**First 5 Sacramento
Systems Optimization and Sustainability (SOS) Committee
Agenda Item Cover Sheet**

Agenda Item – Update on Policy and Advocacy Activities

Staff Overview

Approve the 2025-26 Policy Priorities

The First 5 policy priorities provide staff with clear guidance for tracking proposals and supporting relevant legislation. They outline the Commission's focus areas for advancing policy change—both at the broader systems level and through smaller-scale updates to organizational and programmatic policies in partnership with local providers.

First 5 Sacramento's policy and advocacy efforts continue to center on four key umbrella areas: Health, Early Care and Development, Empowered Families, and Systems Change and Sustainability. These areas ensure our advocacy remains focused, strategic, and aligned with the First 5 Association's statewide policy agenda.

The updated policy priorities are attached for the Committee's review and approval. They are scheduled to go before the Commission for approval at the January meeting.

Sacramento County Policy Priorities

The County of Sacramento Legislative Platform continues to support First 5 Sacramento in the following key policy matters:

- Support First 5 Sacramento's efforts to explore and advance alternative revenue sources for children's services.
- Oppose legislation that would reduce, eliminate, or redirect funding for the First 5 Sacramento Commission.
- Support legislation to promote equity for all children and their families, with special focus on bills that address racial disparities in learning, parent supports, and healthcare.
- Support legislation to maintain or expand funding for subsidized childcare and early learning/preschool for low-income working families.
- Support legislation that promotes healthy childhood nutrition and a physically active lifestyle, which will positively influence children's health and overall quality of life.

CalFresh Benefits Disruption Update

All CalFresh accounts in Sacramento County were fully funded as of November 10. With the passage of the FY26 Appropriations Act, SNAP benefits are now secured through September 2026. Approximately 270,000 Sacramento County residents rely on CalFresh, including nearly 90,000 children. Thank you to Commissioner Kothari and the Health & Human Services Agency leadership for their rapid coordination in

communicating with recipients and helping connect residents to local food resources during the funding pause. We also thank our funded partners—particularly the Family Resource Centers and Child Action, Inc.—for their immediate efforts to support clients with access to food assistance.

First 5 Association Update

Last month, staff attended the First 5 Association’s Policy and Advocacy Summit at the CA Endowment. Association staff and lobbyists discussed legislative and budget proposals for 2026 that have the potential to bring in new dollars to enhance the work done by the 58 County Commissions. The conversation focused on the feasibility of 10 proposals and the timeline, actions and partners needed for effective advocacy. By the end of the meeting, First 5 leaders across the state left with a shared understanding of where the energy and priorities are for next year’s legislative and budget direction. See attachments in packet.

Chose Children Campaign

As we move toward the 2026 governor’s race, this coalition of infant and early care associations is focused on one clear priority: making the well-being of young children a top issue for every candidate. Families across the state are facing daily challenges around childcare, health care and affordability. The goal is to elevate these realities and ensure that the next administration is ready to address them with real solutions. To support that work, there is a full set of campaign resources available at choosechildren.org.

Additional Information/ Next Steps

Review 2026 Policy Priorities

Staff Recommendation

Review and approve



2026 Policy Priorities

First 5 Sacramento partners with parents, community organizations and communities to advance equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive prevention and early intervention policies, systems, and practices. These efforts aim to eliminate racial inequities, promote optimal health and development, and improve the lives of children prenatal through age five and their families. Guided by a whole child/whole family approach, First 5 Sacramento centers the experiences of historically marginalized Californians, including immigrant, low-income, and communities of color disproportionately impacted by systemic racism, wealth inequality, and environmental hazards.

First 5 Sacramento's 2026 policy, advocacy and systems improvement efforts will focus on the following priorities that align with the strategic plan:

Racial Equity

1. Eliminate racial inequities in parental and infant health outcomes by dismantling systemic racist practices, increasing culturally safe and relevant maternal health care, and partnering with health systems to improve outcomes for communities of color.
2. Support systems change efforts, policies, legislation and programs that prioritize racial equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI), anti-black racism, and social justice.

Health and Well-Being

3. Improve access to essential health, behavioral health and social services for young children and families by strengthening system coordination to expand screenings, assessments, early intervention and infant and early childhood mental health services.
4. Preserve access to essential health and social services for young children and their families and strengthen care coordination across systems including navigation and re-certification supports for Medi-Cal.
5. Advocate for culturally responsive, trauma-informed, healing-centered family support services that recognize and build parents' strength, wisdom, and capacity to support their children's optimal development.
6. Protect and leverage health, family and child development investments with a shared goal of removing barriers to accessing systems of care.

Quality Child Care

7. Support efforts to increase the supply of high-quality early care and education programs for children by advocating for equitable access to affordable childcare and early learning programs with a focus on infant and toddler care.
8. Promote recruitment, retention and support systems improvement for the early care and education workforce by advocating for fair compensation and higher education, while valuing diversity across the field.

Parent Partnership

9. Empower parents to be effective community leaders and advocates to improve the well-being of children and families through expanded leadership programming and policies.

Systems Improvement

10. Ensure First 5s are identified and prioritized as fund administrators, innovators, intermediaries, and systems partners in securing and safeguarding dedicated funding for early childhood systems.
11. Support the sustainability of First 5 Sacramento programs, leverage resources and implement policies to strengthen the capacity of funded partners to effectively serve children and families.
12. Explore and advance additional revenue sources for ensuring sustainable, comprehensive, equitable and integrated systems and services for children and families.
13. Advocate to increase economic supports that empower families to meet the basic needs of children.
14. Expand and strengthen the home visiting workforce by supporting professional development, with the goal of ensuring home visitors represent the diversity of Sacramento's families.



Legislative and Budget Concepts

Budget Concepts

1. Infant and Early Childhood Prevention and Early Intervention Funding
2. CalWORKs Home Visiting Program Restoration
3. Technical Assistance Funding for Youth-Serving Providers Participating in CalAIM
4. New Home Visiting Medi-Cal Benefit: Early Childhood Home and Community-Based Services

Legislative Concepts

1. State Presumptive Partnership (or Right of First Refusal) with County First 5 Commissions
2. Joint Powers Authority Between State and First 5 Network
3. Increase State Tobacco Tax to Highest in Nation and Dedicate Revenue to First 5s
4. Prenatal to Three Working Group (Revisiting 2024 Legislation)
5. CDTFA Administrative Fee Cap on First 5 Tobacco Tax Allocations
6. Revenue Capture of Daily Fantasy Sports and/or Future Online Gaming