Memo

To: Board of Commissioners
From: Kim Belshé, Executive Director
Date: July 9, 2020
Subject: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

We come together this month at an extraordinary moment in time:
- The continuing and growing threat posed by COVID-19, which has disproportionally killed and sickened Black people and people of color;
- A deep financial crisis and recession, with Black communities bearing the brunt; and
- A growing national community reeling from police violence and the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and so many others.

As I’ve shared with the First 5 LA team, these are not three separate story lines, but one; our context has laid bare the structural racism that embeds inequities in our health, economic and social systems.

We all have a role to play in addressing racial injustice and inequality and a responsibility to take action – and that includes First 5 LA.

As First 5 LA’s leader and as a white leader, I’m committed to stepping up, looking inward, and taking action. I recognize I’m responsible for my own learning to examine structural racism, white supremacy, and how we are complicit in the spread of this virus.

There is a quote that this moment in time lifts up for me – perhaps for us all – “The need for change bulldozed a road down the center of my mind.” Strong, pointed and relevant – the hallmarks of author and poet Maya Angelou.

As an organization, this moment calls on us to reflect on the type of society we want to help shape and build to strengthen children and families.

First 5 LA cannot reach our North Star if we don’t do our part to close the gaps in equity and opportunity, particularly for young Black children and children of color.
I bring a sense of urgency for us to dig into the long-standing inequities in our health, economic and education systems that hold back Black children and families and communities of color. Towards that end, we are deepening our Strategic Plan implementation work underway to make explicit where and how we are applying equity and an anti-racist lens. At today’s Board meeting, staff will highlight examples of how we are living into our diversity, equity and inclusion values and investment guideline and applying an equity lens to our work.

I also recognize that we must look inward at ourselves and come ready for the solutions to be built together across our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts in the context of structural racism.

On June 24, the First 5 LA team began an organization-wide dialogue that engaged staff around DEI. We were fortunate to be joined by Dr. Cheryl Grills of Loyola Marymount University and John Kim of the Advancement Project to help lead and inform our discussion. In addition, building upon the work we began in 2019 with Dr. Bryant Marks of Morehouse College, we released a Request for Proposal (RFP) in early June to select a consultant with specific expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion to support First 5 LA’s work as we implement our strategic plan.

Our June 24 virtual All Staff dialogue commits us to an effort that will yield important insights to and concrete action regarding how we do our work together - our internal norms, practices, behaviors – and what we do alongside our partners to address racial disparities and improve results for children and families.

I’ve asked the team to examine tangibly equity within our work – what it feels like, sounds like, looks like; and how - with attention, intention, and individual and collective action - it will manifest in the culture of our organization and our work.

This effort – this journey – is organizational, it’s personal, and it will be ongoing.

As James Baldwin said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

We will be guided in this work by our 2020-28 Strategic Plan, which officially launched this month. Consistent with First 5 LA’s strategic direction and approach, we will face the root causes that hold inequities in place, particularly for young Black children and children of color.

The fact is, we cannot achieve our organizational mission if we don’t address systemic racism. Addressing the root causes that keep inequities in place is not just mission critical, it is the essence of our mission.

IMPLEMENTING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

I. PROTECTING AND SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF STAFF AND SUPPORTING OUR CONTRACTED PARTNERS

Continuing our work remotely
As previously shared with the Board, since March 17 First 5 LA has implemented a mandatory work from home order to protect staff health, safety, and well-being through the COVID-19 pandemic. With few
exceptions informed by essential business needs, First 5 LA’s offices have been closed to staff and visitors.

Given the continued growth in COVID-19 cases in LA County, the ability of First 5 LA staff to complete work remotely, and the uncertainty of the pandemic’s impact on systems of care, education, health, and safety, on June 30 I announced that First 5 LA staff will not be required to return to the building to work through the remainder of 2020. While I envision that more staff will voluntarily be allowed to return to the building to work on a phased, case-by-case basis, that decision will be made based on First 5 LA’s business needs and our ability to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

To support the ability of staff to continue to work in safe and productive home environments through the balance of the year, First 5 LA’s Human Resources and Talent Management (HR) and Information Technology (IT) departments have been working to provide additional resources to meet staff needs, informed by a recent staff survey and best practices. Over the coming weeks, First 5 LA will implement a process to allow staff to safely retrieve essential IT equipment from the office (monitors, keyboards), and will implement a modest new work from home benefit to help cover the cost of ergonomic supports like chairs.

As First 5 LA continues to implement remote work, I remain focused on promoting connectivity across the organization. With support from the Communications department, I continue to share daily messages with staff, delivering more than 80 daily reports since March in order to:

- Address safe behavior guidelines from state and county public health departments
- Support the ongoing implementation of our new strategic plan
- Announce updated policies, procedures, and guidance
- Share examples of how First 5 LA continues to advance our priorities
- Reflect on racial injustice and inequality and the role we all have to play, including First 5 LA

To capture stories for my daily messages, the Communications department launched a “Connecting the Dots” series to spotlight how staff are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting themselves and their loved ones while working from home, and continuing to implement First 5 LA’s strategic plan. Here are a few examples of stories that have been shared with staff through this new series:

- First 5 LA plays linchpin role to deliver diapers to needy families
- Supporting Families Virtually Yet Tangibly
- Q&A with Human Resources Generalist Zoyla Cruz
- I&L Department Always on the Lookout for Learning Opportunities Q&A

Accelerating our focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

As I shared in my last message to the Board, while COVID-19 remains a critical contextual factor for First 5 LA’s work, so too is the growing reminder that First 5 LA must accelerate adoption of the newest value included in our strategic plan: diversity, equity, and inclusion. As our strategic plan acknowledges, First 5 LA must do more to combat systemic racism, promote more equitable outcomes for children of color throughout LA County, and more explicitly embrace principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of our work, including our role as an employer.

As noted above, over the past month First 5 LA has accelerated our work focused on living and embracing our DEI values, a process we initially planned to launch more formally later in the summer as part of our strategic plan implementation planning work. I know that truly living diversity, equity, and inclusion will take time, and will require learning, reflection, and action.
II. SUPPORTING LA COUNTY’S YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Result 1: Families have the resources, opportunities, and relationships to optimize their child's development

Meeting the basic needs of families with young children

Continuing to ensure families with young children in LA County have access to basic needs — food, diapers, hygiene kits — needed during the pandemic continues to be a focus for First 5 LA and its partners. The following examples highlight how First 5 LA has continued to contribute to this county-wide priority over the past month:

- Through the leadership of the Communities department and Best Start RNGs, more than $2 million in funding and in-kind resources have been leveraged between March and June to support families with young children in LA County’s Best Start geographies.
- On June 25, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) agreed to expand its Mobility on Demand program, a project focused on improving family access to emergency food and essential goods. With leadership from the Communities department, the program was initially piloted through a partnership between LA Metro, Para Los Niños (the Best Start Metro LA RNG), and Via (a transportation solutions organization). This expansion of a proof of concept developed in a single Best Start geography will allow the project to deliver an additional 750 packages of food and other essential supplies to families across all 14 Best Start geographies.
- Through the leadership of the Family Supports department in partnership with others internally and more than 40 organizations externally, more than 1 million diapers have been distributed to families throughout LA County. Key partners in this effort have included the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH), Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Baby2Baby, Best Start Regional Network Grantees (RNGs) and home visiting providers, LA Best Babies Network, LA n Sync, Black Infant Health providers, Women Infants and Children (WIC) providers, and Paramount Studios. First 5 LA continues to work with Baby2Baby and other partners to distribute emergency supplies to families throughout LA County.

An increased focus on food security

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, food security is a significant concern for families with young children throughout LA County. In April, First 5 LA was invited to join the newly created Los Angeles County Food Security Task Force, a county coordinating body comprised of county agencies and leading regional organizations focused on increasing participation in federally-funded food security programs and ensuring the emergency food system can meet immediate countywide needs. On June 23, the County Board of Supervisors approved a motion directing the Task Force to identify lessons learned during the COVID-19 crisis to develop a plan for sustained collaboration across the county’s food security system.

One First 5 LA-supported effort that will contribute to the county’s vision for countywide food security strategy is the Communities department’s partnership with the LA County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and Los Angeles Food Policy Council to support community focus groups across the five Best Start regions. Initially launched in April 2019 to inform the development of a family-responsive long-term food security strategy in LA County, most of the focus groups were completed in-person prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past month, however, the remaining focus groups for Best Start Region 1 (Metro LA) and Region 5 (Antelope Valley) transitioned to virtual engagement opportunities. A final findings and recommendations report for the county will be completed by August 2020.

Building community power to advocate for investments in parks and open space

With the Board’s approval in September 2019, First 5 LA through the Communities department entered into a strategic partnership to contribute to a pooled fund managed by the Resources Legacy Fund (RLF) to support the Link Governments, Advocates, Families, and Parks (Link) project. The project, focused on
building the capacity of parents and residents to advocate for safe parks and open space in under-resourced communities, is now launching in two Best Start geographies: El Monte and Southeast Los Angeles (SELA). On June 18, the El Monte project launched as a partnership between ActiveSGV, Trust for Public Land, and the City of El Monte. First 5 LA and RLF continue to build relationships in SELA, and anticipate launching the SELA-focused work later this month. In addition to First 5 LA, the Link project is supported by the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, Water Foundation, Enterprise Community Partners, and the Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District.

**Building more early childhood champions and advocating for critical services**

Through the Community Relations department, First 5 LA is working to build more local champions for early childhood development. The success of projects like Link rely on the willingness of policymakers to understand their role in supporting families with young children in their communities. Through a partnership with the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities, the Community Relations department is hosting a City Leader Learning Community to explore opportunities for cities to more proactively support early childhood. The Learning Community includes 19 leaders – mayors, city councilmembers, and staff – from nine cities across LA County. UCLA and First 5 LA launched the learning series on June 18, and plans to host monthly meetings through December 2020. Topics discussed by participants included preventing child abuse, expanding access to child care, closing the digital divide, addressing food insecurity, and plans for opening critical service points for communities including schools.

In addition to First 5 LA’s work with local policymakers, the Public Policy and Government Affairs department, in partnership with the First 5 Association, First 5 California, and other statewide early childhood advocacy partners, worked to ensure that the state’s 2020-2021 state budget, signed by Governor Newsom on June 29, protected funding for critical early childhood services. In response to the economic recession triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Newsom proposed significant cuts to early childhood development programs in his revised budget. Thanks to the hard work of the Policy team in partnership with our early childhood advocacy partners, the state Legislature rejected the majority of the Governor’s proposals and agreed to continue funding critical services including child care and home visiting. For more information regarding the recently enacted state budget and the latest copy of First 5 LA’s state and federal advocacy agenda, see Item 7.

In partnership with the Policy team, the Communications department promoted a number of opportunities to elevate early childhood priorities through outreach to media. In partnership with the First 5 Association and First 5 California, First 5 LA contributed to a joint statement highlighting First 5 support for the budget proposed by the state Legislature. In addition, the Communications team connected Policy staff with KPCC/LAist reporter Marianna Dale to inform the local national public radio affiliate’s coverage of the state budget.

**Communicating directly with parents and partners serving families in the community**

First 5 LA invests in a number of efforts to communicate directly with parents and partners, and the Communications team has worked quickly to pivot communications efforts like the First 5 LA Parenting Guide to digital platforms, and reframed content to address family experiences in LA County. The theme of the recent parenting guide is *Parenting in Times of Pandemic and Protest*, and the June issue of the *Strong Families, Strong Kids* newsletter focused on issues of racial equity, including tips for how to have conversations around race and inequality with young children. Additional resources for parents can be found on First 5 LA’s parenting website. In addition to these efforts, the Communications team continues to urge parents of young children to participate in the 2020 census. Many thanks to Commissioners for your contributions to these resources.

**Results 2 and 3: Children receive early and timely developmental supports and services, and are safe from child abuse and neglect.**
Strengthening LA County’s home visiting system virtually
As previously shared with the Board, First 5 LA has worked with county agencies to transition critical services like home visiting to virtual platforms to ensure families can continue to benefit from programs like Welcome Baby during the pandemic. Every year in June, First 5 LA holds a Family Strengthening Summit to celebrate and strengthen the work of LA County’s network of home visiting providers with more than 600 people participating last year. Though First 5 LA could not host the event in-person as intended last month, the Family Supports department has worked with the Los Angeles Best Babies Network to transition the event to a virtual summit for 750 participants on July 23, continuing to ensure First 5 LA is strengthening the home visiting system despite the need to serve families remotely.

Elevating the needs of families with young children in discussions focused on the digital divide
As critical services like home visiting and opportunities for community engagement transition to virtual platforms, First 5 LA through the Communities and Strategic Partnerships departments has joined countywide partners to explore issues related to the “digital divide,” or the disparities between those in LA County who have access to technology like computers and reliable internet and those who do not. First 5 LA participated in a regional convening of multi-sector leaders hosted by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to address this issue which is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for residents to access critical services through technology. First 5 LA joined the meeting to elevate the perspective of the unique needs of families with young children.

Ensuring access to critical health services
As most non-emergency healthcare services have transitioned to telehealth platforms, there is a growing concern that young children are not receiving essential services which may require in-person visits, like immunizations and developmental assessments and interventions. The Health Systems and Policy departments have started engaging with health provider and advocacy partners to elevate specific concerns and opportunities to promote outreach to families and access to essential services.

One growing concern in the context of COVID-19 is the potential for an increase in adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress. To help increase awareness of ACEs, elevate strategies to build more trauma-informed systems of care, and engage critical partners throughout California, the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) launched the ACEs Aware initiative earlier this year. As part of the initiative, DHCS launched a competitive grant opportunity to award more than $14 million to local and regional organizations working to reduce the incidence of ACEs in communities throughout California. In June, DHCS announced 100 grant recipients from a pool of more than 300 applicants. I am pleased to share that First 5 LA through the Health Systems department was selected as an ACEs Aware grantee, and with the Board’s approval will be able to receive $225,000 to support regional learning sessions to enhance system capacity to implement trauma screenings through June 2021. The grant will allow First 5 LA, in partnership with the local chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, to engage with a range of stakeholders including health plans, county departments, school districts, health providers, and universities. More information regarding this opportunity is included in Item 2E.

Result 4: Children have high-quality early care and education experiences.
Continuing to co-lead the LA County Early Care and Education (ECE) COVID-19 Response Team
To address the ongoing child care crisis highlighted by COVID-19, First 5 LA through the Early Care and Education department continues to partner with LACOE and the County Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE) to convene the L.A. County Early Childhood Education COVID-19 Response Team (Response Team) which includes, among other partners, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation, Office of LA City Mayor Eric Garcetti, Child 360, and the County’s Center for Strategic Public Private Partnerships. The Response Team has worked closely with the philanthropic community to support coordination and learning regarding the ECE needs for emergency responders and essential workers and the systemic needs to keep the sector thriving. Convenings to educate the philanthropic
community were organized by the LA Partnership for Investment in Early Childhood and Southern California Grantmakers with support from First 5 LA and several public and private partners.

**Contributing funds to support LA County’s ECE system**
The Strategic Partnerships department has been tracking COVID-19 response funding from the broader philanthropic community in LA County, and continues to identify potential opportunities to partner with philanthropy to minimize the pandemic’s impact on young children. One result of the partnership between the ECE and Strategic Partnerships departments is the proposed action on today’s agenda outlined in Items 2F and 2G. Combined, these actions will allow First 5 LA to direct a portion of First 5 CA incentive funds earned by First 5 LA to the LA County COVID-19 ECE Response Fund managed by the California Community Foundation (CCF). First 5 LA was awarded these funds by First 5 CA as a reward for exceeding program targets set by First 5 CA’s Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive (IMPACT) initiative. First 5 LA’s contribution to the CCF fund will leverage additional philanthropic support already contributed to the fund. To date, $550,000 has been raised for the CCF fund including contributions from the Parsons Foundation, the Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation, Amgen, the Mayor’s Fund for Los Angeles, Gene & Mindy Stein Foundation, and an anonymous donor. For more information regarding this opportunity, please see the information included in Item 2F and 2G.

**Elevating ECE as a priority for state funding**
A signature advocacy effort established and co-funded by First 5 LA through the Policy department in partnership with the ECE department is the California Early Care and Education Coalition (ECE Coalition), a group of state advocacy organizations which agree to prioritize increased access to quality, affordable early care and education in the state budget. As previously reported, with support from First 5 LA the ECE Coalition mobilized quickly to elevate the needs of ECE providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past month, the Coalition quickly pivoted yet again to respond to the Governor’s proposed cuts to child care services and provider rates, working with legislative champions to prioritize child care funding in the final budget compromise.

As part of the effort to elevate the importance of early care and education, the Communications department coordinated opportunities for First 5 LA staff in the ECE and Policy departments to inform the development of media coverage focused on child care. As a result of these efforts, the Los Angeles Times published an opinion piece highlighting child care as an essential component of re-opening the economy. The Los Angeles Times additionally published an Editorial Board opinion calling for government to prioritize “bailing out” child care as a critical step to help the economy.

**CONTRACTS EXECUTED BETWEEN $25K-$75K**

**Procurement Update**
Pursuant to the Procurement Policy adopted on February 13, 2014, “The Executive Director (or designee) may approve any contract less than $75,000 in the aggregate in a fiscal year and will establish appropriate internal policies and controls for those awards. Copies of contracts executed in the amount of $25,000 or more and up to $75,000 within a fiscal year will be provided to the Commission during the course of its normal business and be provided as informational items.”

The following contracts were executed on June 1, 2020. Copies of the executed contracts can be found here: [https://www.first5la.org/uploads/files/july-ed-report-contracts_36.pdf](https://www.first5la.org/uploads/files/july-ed-report-contracts_36.pdf)

**#10241 FOUNDATION FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES – Contract Amount: $70,000**
*Contract Period: 6/1/2020 – 6/30/2021*
The Contractor is the fiscal sponsor for Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS). The Contractor will provide the necessary funding for ECEPTS to subcontract for an implementation evaluation of the Home Visitors Apprenticeship at Antelope Valley College.
#10242 JENNIFER KENT CONSULTING – Contract Amount: $50,000  
Contractor will provide technical assistance and recommendations on methodology and approach to ensure that First 5 LA's methodology for calculating a proposed case rate or a per member per month rate for home visiting is accurate, comprehensive, and consistent with accepted MediCal practices.

Staff Contact: Andrea Abeleda (aabeleda@first5la.org)