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## ***New Campaign Launches with Focus on Childcare and the Economy***

*First 5 California Launches Public Awareness Campaign on Childcare Affordability*

**(SACRAMENTO, CA – August 27, 2024)** The California Children and Families Commission ([First 5 California](#)) has announced the launch of the [Raise CA Strong](#) campaign, an effort to increase awareness about the economic and societal impacts of the childcare affordability crisis and the need for additional state investments to boost childcare access for more California families.

The campaign focuses on public awareness of the affordability and accessibility crisis Californians face with childcare to increase public interest in finding equitable solutions that work for all California families. The campaign is informed with research performed in 2023 including surveys conducted with over 1,000 California participants. Surveys included both parents and business owners in an attempt to understand what issues around childcare were most motivating for them to take action. The newly released report, [The Childcare Crisis in California & 5 Pathways for Change](#), highlights these findings as well as actionable recommendations for state and local leaders.

“We are thrilled to announce the start of the Raise CA Strong campaign. We know from our research that 48% of parents, mostly women, report difficulty in finding affordable childcare and 72% of parents have to patch together more than one solution such as grandparents, siblings, or neighbors, causing parents to feel stressed or guilty about childcare,” said Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, First 5 California Executive Director. “We often don’t talk about programs for babies as critical infrastructure, but the current childcare crisis in California and across the nation has shown us that not investing in childcare infrastructure causes economic and social impacts that we all pay for.”

The Raise CA Strong campaign incorporates the business community as a key stakeholder in this fight for accessible and affordable childcare. California’s economy could grow by \$60 billion if all parents had access to affordable childcare. According to our survey, 50% of parents reported disruptions in their work activity as a result of childcare issues and what we know is that childcare translates to fewer missed work days and overall increased productivity at work. Additionally, when children have access to developmentally appropriate, educational settings from a young age, they are more prepared to enter school and are more likely to graduate on time and be ready to enter the workforce in the future.

"This campaign is a long-awaited call to action for Californians to see child care as the priority it should be. It allows us to envision what the child care system in California should look like—one that serves *all* families because families cannot work and businesses cannot stay open without child care. I'm eager to continue this important work as a child care provider and as a First 5 California Commissioner, to ensure a cornerstone of what makes our economy run gets the attention it deserves," said Jackie Majors, CEO of Crystal Stairs, one of California's largest nonprofit child care providers.

Raise CA Strong comes on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, where roughly a third of the childcare workforce was lost and is still struggling to build back. State funding over the past decade and longer has not been sufficient to properly accommodate the number of families in need of more affordable childcare, leaving many out of the workforce as a result. About 45% of the business owners surveyed in this report said they struggle to fill job openings yet most often do not recognize how lack of childcare contributes to this challenge.

"This issue has been tirelessly fought for by our devoted childcare providers and advocates for decades. What sets Raise CA Strong apart from other efforts is our focus on public will building to move the needle. When we surveyed parents and business owners in California and told them how these investments would help families and the economy, they were overwhelmingly supportive. Inadequate access to childcare costs California employers \$13 billion a year in lost productivity and costs working parents \$37 billion a year in lost income. It only makes sense to change this. When we give the public the ability to organize around an issue they care about and the information they need to be informed, decision-makers tend to pay attention." said Dr. Angelo Williams, Chief Deputy Director, First 5 California.

"It is our hope to move this conversation forward in a new way and separate it from year to year state budget conversations where childcare has historically been under-resourced," said Ms. Wong. "We are looking forward to the next chapter for childcare in California."

The new report, *The Childcare Crisis in California & 5 Pathways for Change*, is available for download at [www.RaiseCAStrong.com](http://www.RaiseCAStrong.com).

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#### **ABOUT FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA**

First 5 California was established in 1998 when voters passed Proposition 10, which taxes tobacco products to fund services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. First 5 California programs and resources are designed to educate and support teachers, parents, and caregivers in the critical role they play during a child's first five years—to help California kids receive the best possible start in life and thrive. For more information, please visit [www.ccfc.ca.gov](http://www.ccfc.ca.gov).

#### **ABOUT RAISE CA STRONG**

Raise CA Strong is a movement building public support for greater access to affordable childcare for all families in California to promote the well-being, health and education of children, opportunities for families, and a strong economy. The Raise CA Strong effort is sponsored by First 5 California which also works to advance equity in early childhood education in California. For more information, please visit [www.raisecastrong.com](http://www.raisecastrong.com).