

From: [Jennifer Kennedy](#)
To: [FGG, Public Comment](#)
Subject: [External] Support for Agenda Item #15 - District 5
Date: Tuesday, May 20, 2025 8:29:31 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image008.png](#)
[Agenda Item 15 D5 Only Support Testimony for Healthy Development Services.pdf](#)

Hello,

I am submitting comments supporting funding for Healthy Development Services that were submitted to First 5 Commission of San Diego for their March 25 Commission Meeting.

Please find attached 3 comments from people residing and providing services in District 5.

Thank you in advance for including this packet in today's May 20 Board of Supervisors public comment.

Respectfully,
Jennifer

Jennifer Kennedy (she/her)

Associate Project Director

American Academy of Pediatrics, California Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3)

✉ jkennedy@aapca3.org

🌐 aapca3.org



American Academy of Pediatrics 
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

HDS Testimony

for the

First 5 San Diego

Commission Meeting

March 25, 2025

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 12:23:18 PM

03/18/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Submitted on behalf of a caregiver that wished to remain anonymous: "My experience with first 5 has been the best. I am beyond grateful for the HDS program and everything that it has done for our family. HDS has helped us significantly in understanding our children and trying to navigate their development! I would definitely recommend it to lots of families for multiple reasons. One being that they truly care for the families that they are helping."

Holly Arnold

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/14/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For March 25 meeting

Hi, I am a community pediatrician at Neighborhood Health in Escondido, California. We are in the North Inland region for First 5 services. I wanted to express my unwavering support for all the benefits of this program. We serve a predominantly poor and indigent population with many barriers to health and childhood adverse experiences, almost all with Medi-Cal insurance or uninsured. I can recall numerous patients of my own who have benefitted enormously from participating in our local program's services. We regularly have babies with plagiocephaly (misshapen heads from lack of tummy time or stiff neck) and delay motor skills, and early intervention is key to preventing the need for a head-shaping molding helmet. The rate of developmental delays in children is around 20-30%, and we routinely refer for speech delay in children who are not meeting even the backstop parameters, such as at least putting 2 words together by 2 years, or 3 word phrases by 3 years, or kids who still have unintelligible speech by 4 years. These kids benefit so much from the evaluation and speech services offered – especially since the children with milder-moderate delays who are not picked up by official early intervention services (0-3, Regional Center), fall through the cracks, and have to wait until 3 years for a school district evaluation – and qualifying at the school depends so much on the resources available in that district. And for the little ones, waiting until they can be seen after age 3 is not appropriate – the early brains of kids are primed and wired to interventions precisely at this time. This applies to the kids with sensory and behavior issues, and the parenting support is invaluable in not only positive outcomes, but preventing future depression, abuse, and stress on the family as a unit due to neurodiverse kids as a population. And the case management benefits help our families who already have so many barriers such as parents who don't speak English to navigate the healthcare and school systems, and have regularly provided assistance in helping our speech delayed kids eventually qualify at the district when appropriate. The community building of relationships with other agencies generates trust and First 5 Healthy Development Services with Palomar Health is absolutely trusted by local preschools, DSEP (foster kids), and physicians alike. While there is no manual for helping to raise healthy children, First 5 is certainly a much needed tool in our area to help us raise healthy and loving families. I hope you will consider this in funding decisions and continue to direct support to First 5.

Sincerely,
Dr Byron Chow MD

Byron Chow

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/14/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Please see attached analogy regarding the impact of HDS on the community. This analogy aims to describe what "needy" means in relation to the work we do.

Holly Arnold

<https://first5sandiego.org/index.php?gf-download=2025%2F03%2FHealthy-Development-Services-A-Lagoon-Story.pdf&form-id=5&field-id=14&hash=cbce9f4f694fb18f889aa88ed736b6c8e2f71081abbfa3a1e85206ea8c9ed773>

Healthy Development Services

San Diego's Community Lagoon: An Analogy

Written by: Holly Arnold and Jen Goins



A LAGOON IS A
NATURAL SAFETY
NET FROM A LARGE,
EMPTY BODY OF
WATER TO A
DEVELOPED AND
RESOURCED AREA

Important Facts About Lagoons:

They provide **habitats** for many animals and plants | They **offer valuable natural resources** to people living and working in those areas | Coastal lagoons are seasonally **productive ecosystems** | Play an important role in **mitigating the consequences** of coastal flooding

HDS provides a protective lagoon for children and families that don't have a place in other "habitats"

In the "large bodies of water" surrounding the "lagoon", you can find higher-income families and/or families with no developmental concerns. These families have the means to access the resources available to them on the "land" or they are not in need. They are able to pay the fees associated, have position and power to advocate for themselves, and have resources readily available.

In the "land" outside the "lagoon", low-income families and/or families with moderate-to-severe developmental needs have access to services like home visiting programs, subsidized childcare, free health care, insurance, CAES, and the School District.

Families who are not in either of these situations are truly those in highest needs and need the safety of the HDS "lagoon".



San Elijo Lagoon

HDS provides a resource to children and families who live in the "lagoon"

- **Care Coordination** to support families navigate the often-difficult process of getting to the "land" where higher level services reside
- **Bridging** support for families while they are in the process of accessing higher level services and navigating getting to the right place
- **Resource** for community programs, schools, and healthcare providers to supplement the support they provide to their families and act as a partner



San Dieguito Lagoon

HDS plays a role in mitigating the consequences of system "flooding"

When children receive services through HDS prior to entering school, they **may not need to access special education or insurance-based services**, which are highly impacted. This leaves room for children with more moderate-to-severe needs to benefit from these higher levels of care.



Carlisbad Lagoon

Preventative education with families at HDS leads to confident and healthy caregiving, as evidenced by program outcomes which shows an increase in supportive behaviors such as spending time together, reading together, etc. We know based on evidenced-based research that **children with these protective factors in place will have more protection from ACEs as they grow up.**

Families who understand these protective factors based on their time with HDS **may have more resources to lean on in times of need, reducing need for access to higher-level supports (social service programs, school services).**

Without the HDS Lagoon as a safety net, we will be moving the needle away from serving the neediest and leaving a vulnerable population with no resources

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

North Coastal/
North Inland
District 5

03/11/2025

First 5 San Diego Finance Committee

Hello,

I wanted to take a moment to express our deep gratitude for the partnership we have with First 5 and the critical role that the Healthy Development Services play in our pediatric office and within our community.

The early years of a child's life are absolutely vital for their long-term health and well-being. Through First 5's support, we've been able to provide essential services for our patients under the age of 5, helping them reach developmental milestones and address health concerns that could otherwise go unnoticed or untreated. The resources and programs made available to us through First 5 have not only benefited individual children but have contributed significantly to the health of the entire community.

We've seen firsthand how these services empower families to navigate the often complex healthcare system, ensuring that even the most vulnerable children receive the care and attention they need. Without these resources, we fear that many children would miss out on early intervention that could have lifelong implications on their health, development, and educational outcomes.

We hope that the importance of early childhood health services continues to be recognized and prioritized. Reducing funding for these services would have a direct impact on our ability to support families and children in need, leading to long-term consequences that could be difficult to reverse. We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work alongside First 5 and advocate for the well-being of children in our community.

Gratefully,

Marlene Xochical, Child Development Specialist at TrueCare Pediatrics

Marlene Xochical

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:30:14 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Funding Discussion presentation

Hello, my name is Courtney Baltiyskyy. I am a mother of two young kids in Chula Vista and an advocate for children, youth, and their families. Within this commitment I work with the YMCA and help lead the Children First Collective, a group of organizations and leaders tackling the challenges of access to affordable, quality child care. One of our commitments is mental and behavior health for kids and their caregivers. First 5 plays an instrumental role in this and is now in grave jeopardy. We thank the First 5 San Diego Commission for their steadfast work to consider the budget with an equity-based approach, mitigating the risk of losing services for those who need it the most. With a spirit of collaboration and impact evidence, San Diego has an opportunity to innovate and share the funding responsibility across new government entities, agencies, and philanthropy.

First 5 San Diego programs contribute to and absolutely enhance sustainability in the areas of child and family well-being, the environment, and the economy. I want to draw attention to the profound support offered to parents and caregivers for behavioral screenings, developmental delay screenings, and treatment for over 27,000 0-5 year olds through the Healthy Development Services program. First 5 San Diego and partners have done this important work with the resources available. Testimonials from families in First 5's reports truly showcase the transformative change experienced with this support. First 5 San Diego data is transparent and accessible. However, many families continue to experience long waiting lists, delays in assessment, and a lack of direct services. This is concerning, and the worry in lack of resources only compounds when considering the projected and significant decrease of funding from the state and local district funding. When considering mental health equity and well-being in San Diego, we have to choose to care for a true continuum – from young children to the adults who care for them. I ask you to do all you can to guarantee funding for HDS in your final decisions.

Courtney Baltiyskyy

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 1:53:27 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

March 25 Agenda item 2 (discussion of funding reductions)

HDS has been the first line of referral for hundreds of physicians caring for thousands of children with mild to moderate delays. Any change (although necessary) will disrupt hard wired workflows that ensure a rapid response for children. HDS also gets referrals and supports children with more severe delays, taking the supportive role of ensuring parents are ready to act upon the referrals for intensive intervention their child needs. With the new dyadic care benefit, some of these services (such as behavior/mental health support) are fundable. However, staffing will need to change and will become more expensive. Patient access representatives are more expensive than admin's who schedule appointments and triage families without having or needing knowledge of funding streams, authorization processes and registration in the EHR. Likewise the process to bill can cost more than the FFS reimbursement by Medi-Cal. For example, a speech therapy visit may be reimbursed at 44.00/visit and it may cost 35.00 to drop the bill. The cost of that speech therapist (SLP) is about 58.00+/hr with benefits and no other overhead costs added (test protocols, scoring programs, time in report writing, etc.). Similarly, a Dyadic Behavioral Health (DBH) visit is provided by a licensed mental health therapist (or a supervised associate therapist) which costs the same or upwards from the cost of an SLP. The DBH visit reimburses at 116.00, and other services such as psychoeducational work with parent or coordination of referrals each pay a FFS rate of 20.00/15 min. These codes are available only for Medi-Cal insured children. Other children, such as those in HMOs (e.g., Sharp Rees Stealy), most likely will not be authorized, and yet time translates to dollars spent in the effort that goes into this denial that results in no service, and no funding.

It makes sense to maximize billing and payment opportunities. Revenues are declining and something must change. However a careful fiscal analysis is needed to evaluate the shift in costs to include a different level of support, use of the EHR for registration, billing and reporting, and to accommodate licensed and licensable, billable staff with appropriate supervision. Many bilingual, bicultural child development specialists need to be laid off, while bilingual, bicultural licensed staff are difficult to find and recruit. The risk is that the funding cuts will result in losing a team's diversity, and will increase costs, although certainly, with regard to behavior services, this change must be explored to take advantage of dyadic care services now being reimbursed by the State. Might you consider starting with Behavior Services. Based upon experience with HealthySteps, I would expect this transition to billable services will take a year as programs transition to systems and a workforce that fits the new model. Is there the possibility of a funding commitment, with a hard timeline, to bridge the gap while the more sustainable funding streams are addressed?

As an aside, how do we ensure the child development specialists we lose transition to roles that increase child care slots (and will compensation be comparable?), so that we don't lose this talent?

Kristin Gist

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:27:52 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5
(Escondido)

03/20/2025

Other - If Other, provide details in narrative below.

For the March 25th meeting

HDS has made a large positive impact on the lives of the families I serve in the North San Diego area. It's truly incomprehensible to imagine a decrease in their services being considered. Please allow these vital services continue for our community.

Kelly Lewis, Public Health Nurse

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:41:52 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

HDS has been an essential part of supporting families. Many clients who are of lower socioeconomic status are dependent on the services that HSD provides. It is crucial that HDS remains intact with their current funding to help them serve the underserved communities and provide better outcomes for the children in need and ultimately, the families as a whole.

Letisha Kingsbury

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:32:45 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

As a public health nurse with COSD, I am eager to voice my support for HDS. HDS services are invaluable to families throughout San Diego County. HDS services are essential to ensuring every child has the opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive. HDS provides critical early intervention services for developmental delays to support community members at risk of poor outcomes. Cutting funding for HDS will decrease resources available to countless children, leaving them without services to reach full potential, disproportionately affecting those from underserved communities. I feel that we as a community should all advocate for and have a moral obligation to invest in children's health and development. Sincerely, Mischa Denton

Mischa Denton

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:31:42 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

I am beyond appreciative of the assistance and support my daughter and myself are receiving from Healthy Services. As a single mother who is learning how to navigate life with a toddler who learns differently than her peers - I am thankful that I am able to receive the support and education to further assist her. I do not know where I would have needed to start looking for help had it not been for them, to defund them would be a great loss for the entire community.

Stephanie Johnson

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:22:26 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

This comment is in regards to the funding cuts to the Healthy Development Services program.

I am writing to you both as a concerned early childhood educator and a concerned parent. I am a director of a preschool in Carlsbad and I hold a MA degree in early childhood education. I am also a mom of four children under age five, one of which has personally benefited from this program.

At our preschool, we have had the pleasure of hosting parenting classes at our site thanks to this program. When we have a child who is struggling, this program is our first line for offering support and education for the families we serve. This program is unique in that it really is a full family support program, not just services for the child. So many families have concerns about behavior, routine, discipline, and other parenting challenges but don't have a lot of places to turn for answers. Pediatrician appointments are quick and rarely go into detail about these concerns. Finding answers online is a nightmare - everybody has 10 different answers to every problem and it is very difficult to parse out what is evidence based and how to implement solutions for their unique family. The nature of this program has also been beneficial because parents who are resistant to acknowledging that their child needs support have been more receptive to this type of program as opposed to a higher level such as the school district.

As someone who has been in the education field for over ten years, I can honestly say we need programs like this more than ever before. Since the covid-19 pandemic we have seen an increase in challenging behaviors and emotional regulation difficulties, delays in development, toilet training challenges, and parental stress. What we have not seen is an increase in IFSP/IEPs, which shows that while the challenges parents are facing are mounting, the support for these families has not followed the same trend. This is one of the few programs that meets this need and I worry about how this will affect us personally and as a society.

My own son is one of the many children benefiting from this program. My child struggles with emotional regulation and sensory processing, but he does not have a diagnosis that would warrant an IEP. After going through the support courses offered by HDS, we were referring to play therapy right after my son turned 3. I was so excited that my son would be able to receive this support because there isn't a whole lot out there for the kids who need some extra support but don't need enough to warrant district services. So often parents will try to get their children support through the school district but they don't qualify immediately and that critical window of the first five years closes before they are even able to secure a diagnosis. You can imagine my frustration and heartbreak when we found out, after only three sessions, that funding was being cut and we wouldn't be receiving the full 26 sessions. There is a clear and powerful message in this decision: kids like my son, the ones not "bad off" enough for IEPs, don't

matter. We are supposed to stand by, watch our children struggle, and wait until they are finally behind enough to warrant higher levels of intervention as opposed to giving them much needed support to possibly prevent reaching that level. By the time they reach this level they are behind academically and emotionally and often carry the stigma that comes with being the more challenging child. This decision goes against the plethora of research that supports the first five years being the best time to offer support to children and puts children in a position to be constantly playing catch up.

This decision will cause the achievement gap between socioeconomic groups to widen. Like many families, we are not in a position to pay for private services. More often than not, insurance requires a diagnosis to cover any services and still fights tooth and nail to provide as little support as they can get away with. With economic pressures increasing and no sign of relief coming anytime soon, now is not the time to turn our backs on these families.

I strongly urge you to consider the long-term consequences of children and families losing access to this support. As a society, we all suffer when individuals do not learn healthy emotional regulation or have the support they need to be secure, productive members of society.

I appreciate your time and consideration regarding this matter.

Sami Neblett

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 5:38:38 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

Dear members of the First 5 San Diego Commission,

As a nurse working with families with children ages 0-3 years old in San Diego, I have been so grateful for the services provided by Healthy Development Services (HDS). HDS not only provides early detection and intervention services, but they have been able to connect and engage with families that have barriers to care such as a lack of transportation, language barriers, low income, or uninsured. The classes they offer educate families on developmental and behavioral expectations and ways to support their child's development and promote secure attachment. HDS is a vital resource in our community. Please consider maintaining current level funding for HDS.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Nilsen, RN, PHN

Stephanie Nilsen

To Whom It May Concern,

I am deeply concerned to hear that the Healthy Development Services program is considering cutting funding for essential resources that many families and children across San Diego County rely on. Reducing these services would be a tremendous disservice to our community. With lasting effects that will take a toll on the well-being of our community.

Allow me to introduce myself: I am a mother of five children, all of whom were born and raised in North County. I chose this area to raise my family because of the strong sense of community. Two of my children are biological, and three are adopted. My youngest, who was born prematurely, required swallowing therapy through county services. Without the financial support provided by these programs, I would not have been able to afford the care my child needed. As a mother, my only job is to provide safety and security for my children, and knowing I had resources and therapists advocating for us made all the difference. Thanks to those services, my daughter is now 21 years old, attending college, and leading a relatively typical life.

I am also a preschool director with 40 years of experience in early education. I work at a local nonprofit school and am actively involved in serving and connecting with our community every day. Through my work, I witness firsthand the positive impact of services like those offered by Healthy Development. For example, First 5 has come to our school to conduct hearing and vision screenings. Over the years, I have referred countless parents to First 5 for support and resources. And to be very honest with you I have a family in that I'm going to refer to First 5 next week when they are home from vacation. The 2-year-old boy has a very limited vocabulary (about 10 words such as mama) and frequently gets upset when his classmates don't understand him. This is so hard to watch because he wants to communicate with his friends but is unable to right now. The best part about this situation is once this child receives speech therapy his life will become easier and it's a matter of a couple of years when we see him talking and effectively communicating with those around him, so he too can live a relatively typical life.

The resources provided by Healthy Development Services are vital to the well-being of our community. Cutting them would be a great loss to the children and families who depend on these programs to thrive. I am asking you to please reconsider making cuts to his program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Colleen O'Connor, Co-Director of Pilgrims Children's Center



From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 8:18:38 AM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Item C

To the esteemed members of the First 5 Commission:

I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of robust early intervention services through HDS as well as the invaluable role they play in partnership with school districts. Early intervention is not merely a program; it is a fundamental investment in the future of children, families, and community.

The developmental years are a period of rapid growth and neural plasticity. Early identification and intervention during this crucial window can significantly alter a child's trajectory, preventing the escalation of challenges into more complex and costly needs later in life. By addressing developmental delays, learning disabilities, and behavioral concerns early on, they empower children to reach their full potential, fostering academic success, social-emotional well-being, and overall health.

Early intervention services are not limited to addressing individual needs. A truly effective approach supports the "whole child" and the "whole family." By providing comprehensive services, including educational support, therapeutic interventions, and family resources, they create a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes holistic development. This approach strengthens families, equips them with essential tools, and fosters resilience, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more stable community.

Furthermore, HDS plays a crucial role in preventing the need for more intensive and costly services in later years. By addressing challenges early, they reduce the likelihood of academic failure, behavioral difficulties, and reliance on specialized services throughout a child's educational journey and beyond. This proactive approach is not only ethically sound but also fiscally responsible. Investing in early intervention is an investment in a brighter and healthier future for everyone. It is a commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. By prioritizing early intervention through HDS and fostering strong community partnerships, they can create a more equitable and supportive environment for all our children and families. Any reduction in funding will be detrimental to the futures of the children they serve and to educational outcomes in the future.

Amanda Carlson

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:48:31 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

HDS is a wonderful program that assists with childhood development. With less funding, many families will be affected. Development is essential when children grow up as it affects them holistically--gross development, fine development, communication, and problem solving, and social strengths. With what physicians can do in a span of an hour in a yearly basis. HDS can do weekly or even more depending on the need or acuity. HDS assists in child development even before they go into pre-school to make sure they aren't behind developmentally. HDS improves confidence for not only the child, but also for families. A wealth of knowledge is given at the home through HDS and the work they do. Reduction in funding would be a disservice for all the assistance and support they do for the community.

Arielle Lamuna

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 10:18:43 AM

North Inland
District 2

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

Dear San Diego Commision,

I am a Public Health Nurse from the North Inland Region, and I make use of this resource for our at-risk families and their children.

HDS has mastered the process of efficiently and effectively outreach, identify, address, and obtain results through supporting children's development and parental skills over so many years of serving the community. HDS has supported several of our programs consisted of families at risk, teens, first time mothers, babies with mild to moderate delays, and struggling parents in need of learning basic skills to support their children's healthy growth, increase self-efficacy, independence, and improve families' health outcomes.

It is an established and proven model that includes and opens access to hard-to-find interdisciplinary experts that can efficiently address important issues at home and on time before becoming a bigger threat to each child, parent, family, and the community. Everyone I have referred to this resource has reported success at alleviating and addressing important concerns, improving skills, improving activities of daily living, and overall health outcomes for their entire family. The HDS program has also been a strong liaison for families at risk needing further additional resources.

Diana Becerra

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Watson, Hunter](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:30:06 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th Meeting

As a Speech Language Pathologist currently working at HDS, I believe it's crucial to share my experiences across various settings and highlight the importance of the Healthy Development Services (HDS) program. One of the most frustrating aspects of my career has been seeing children who are in desperate need of speech and language support, yet are unable to access care for various reasons. These barriers may include lack of insurance, insurance denial for evaluation or treatment, prohibitively high co-pays, or the child's delays not being significant enough to qualify through their school district, among others. HDS steps in to support these children and families, ensuring they receive the services they need when they otherwise would not receive them. Early intervention is vital for a child's success, not only in the short term but for their lifelong development.

I began my journey at HDS during grad school and spent the next six years working in private practice, always with the goal of returning to HDS. Why? Because I realized then, and continue to see now, how unique and important this program is, offering services to families at no-cost.

Given the critical role HDS plays in supporting children and families who would otherwise go without necessary care, I urge decision-makers to consider the significant impact of this program when making funding decisions. Investing in early intervention through HDS is an investment in the long-term success and well-being of these children and, ultimately, our community

Heidi Leininger

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Watson, Hunter](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:30:08 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

First 5 San Diego Commission Public Comment in Support of HDS

I am grateful for the opportunity to bring to your attention one of the ways a reduction in funding to Healthy Development Services (HDS) will have a substantial impact on our communities, particularly in the North Inland region.

The importance of having developmental services such as speech, occupational and physical therapy offered through HDS is critical given the considerable barriers families in our communities face. Children who have Medi-Cal coverage, which is approximately 83% in the North Inland region, are largely authorized to Rady Children's in San Diego. Obstacles such as high gas costs and distances families must travel to access those services contribute to the existing challenge of asking for time off work. Additionally, wait lists for those insurance funded services will inevitably grow due to the decrease of available developmental therapies in HDS as a result of a decrease in funding. Our rural communities of Fallbrook, Ramona, Julian, Borrego, Valley Center/Pauma Valley, and Santa Isabel already experience hardship in accessing essential services, necessitating trips to Escondido. Traveling to San Diego and even Oceanside adds further strain on these families, particularly for working parents and caregivers with less flexibility. Many of our immigrant families are already experiencing fear in even traveling outside their own neighborhoods.

We value the relationships we have established with our external early intervention partners through our regional school districts and the San Diego Regional Center. Together, our efforts in supporting families by either providing services or linking eligible children beyond HDS, ensures that no child falls through the cracks.

Thank you for allowing me to share this information and for your commitment to the health and development of young children. Your consideration of these concerns as you make decisions regarding funding is profoundly appreciated.

Tara Dominguez

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 5:09 PM
To: HHSA, First5SDInfo <First5SDInfo.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: [External] Contact Us Form Submission

Name

Amy Cisneros-Leon

Email

[REDACTED]

Subject

Healthy Development Services

Message

These services have been of great help and value to me. Thanks to these services I was able to get the much needed help that I need as a mother with anxiety and depression. When these services came into my life I was in a very dark place and they helped me get through it and for that I am forever grateful.

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:18:50 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

This program helped to create a safe space for me and my family, especially for me. We lost our insurance and unfortunately, I was unable to get the help that I needed for my mental state as well as physical. First five helped me during this time that seemed very dark. They helped provide resources, they stayed on top of my care when I was struggling to manage my life as a new parent, they reached out consistently to see if I needed anything or if there was any resource available to us and without them I don't think I'd be in the place where I am today. My family has benefited from the help we received and I was able to have a better relationship with my daughter and she is surpassing milestones thanks to the help we received and the care from our team. Thank you to everyone at the office who helped my family thrive.

Michelle Espinoza

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 3:48 PM

To: Watson, Hunter <Hunter.Watson@sdcounty.ca.gov>

Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

March 25 meeting

Through First 5 I've been able to get the mental health help I needed without having to worry about the out of pocket expenses. I was still dealing with a mountain of anxiety and depression on top of lasting postpartum depression. Therapy with Caroline has helped me to give myself grace and by providing an outlet for me, I am able to be a better person for my family. Therapy has also helped me cope and adjust with the multiple therapies my son is currently undergoing with his being high risk for autism.

With the help of First 5, I have less bad days and am able to enjoy my family more.

Melody Bucayan

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 11:37:17 AM

North Central
Districts 2, 3, 4

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I would just like to express how helpful the First 5/C3 program has been for myself and my son. This program was made available for us because my son had spent time in the NICU and I was referred to this program. The staff at first 5 are so helpful and so knowledgeable and really helped me as a first time mom. The program offers great resources and support for parents. Having First 5 as a resource has been so helpful in navigating toddlerhood! The in person classes they offered for my son were great. He thrived there and the staff really took the time to observe him and make recommendations for things to work on with him at home, based on his temperament . I was given tools to be better parent and it has helped me so much. I also watched other kids in the class progress and I know that other parents felt supported by the staff. I think this is such a great program and resource and any parent would be lucky to have to work with this team. Thank you!

Olivia Lavallee

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 11:53:24 AM

North Central
Districts 2, 3, 4

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I support continued funding for all First 5 programs. Many families in San Diego have used and relied on these services as a source of support, information, and intervention from their children. As a speech therapist at Rady Children's Hospital, I greatly appreciate the work at First 5 does in meeting the communication and behavior needs of children with mild to moderate impairments. These children would face very long waitlists to access care at our clinics. Insurance can also be a barrier for them.

I appreciate your consideration of keeping all Forst 5 programs fully funded.

Catherine Dabasinskas

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 1:53:19 PM

North Central
District 3

03/19/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

The parenting advisory services offered through Rady's have been a complete game-changer for our relationship with our child. Following the provided advice and recommendations has enabled us to have a stronger relationship, and really allowed our child to flourish in both sensory regulation and interactions with his peers.

This service has been a turning point in the raising of our children, and we are better prepared to be great parents in the future. No other 'parent help' services or guides have had this big of an impact, this fast. Losing this service would be a tragedy for the parents and children of San Diego.

Andrew Hawk

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM

Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/14/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

The program was excellent and has really provided me insight on the development of my child. The resources have allowed me to better help my child improve in areas such as social, motor, and communication skills. I would highly recommend it to other parents.

Grace Bernardo

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM

Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/13/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

I think this program is absolutely essential to any child's development. Not all parents have what it takes to properly evaluate and help their children grow and succeed. This gives everyone an opportunity to learn developmental skills from a professional. I think this program should be continued and fully supported at all costs.

Jacques Pieterse

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

North Inland
District 5

03/17/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

March 25

Dear Commission:

As a pediatric nurse practitioner and a parent of two boys who are high functioning on the Autism Spectrum Disorder, I sincerely hope you consider the impact of any reduction of services to children with developmental delays. To a child with development (fine, gross, social/emotional) delays, early services (PT, OT, speech and behavioral interventions) are critical to provide during the first few years of life. I can professionally and personally attest to the life-changing impact services can make on children. It can literally make the difference between a child who learns to function appropriately in a classroom before they attend so they can learn and going through life behind from the very beginning. Please avoid any cuts to these programs. In a perfect world, all children who need them would receive them and we are far away from covering even most children adequately.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Warmest Regards,
Tammy

--

Tamara Troyer Denlinger, Doctor of Nursing Practice, C-PNP, C-FNP



Tamara Denlinger

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:50:44 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting.

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing this with a heavy heart. I am an RN with a practice that serves some of the most vulnerable in our community. Over the last 12 years, I have relied upon First 5 for their comprehensive support for children and their families. They have never failed to exhaust all resources to provide life-changing services. Not only do I hear gratitude and relief from parents trying to meet their children's needs, but I see the remarkable progress being made by the children. As parents, we all want our children to thrive, but beyond that, as citizens we have an obligation to simply do the right thing!

Children are our future. Any reduction in funding for this program is a conscious decision to jeopardize not only these children and their families, but also the foundation of our future. I implore you to consider the value of the services provided by First 5 and the significant return on investment.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter, Kathy Snyder, BSN, RN, PHN.

Kathleen Snyder

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:27:26 AM

County-wide

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I am writing to support continued funding directly to the First 5 Commission of San Diego. I recently moved to San Diego from Boston, Massachusetts, and have noticed the differences in the quality of early intervention services almost immediately. The early intervention and parent training provided by First 5 is a gold standard of care which I had only ever read about in textbooks and scientific articles before becoming a resident of San Diego. These services are an essential public health effort to support the long-term success of at-risk and disabled youth across their lifespan. For example, I will be discharging a 2 year old from individual speech/language treatment at the end of this month who received services through First 5 and would not have been ready for discharge without it. There is a clear and strong research basis for these interventions and their continued implementation is vital to the continued success of child and disability services throughout all of San Diego. When I am able to successfully discharge a child from therapy at two years old, I am then able to see even more children under 3 who are in need of evidence based early invention treatment. This reduces the caseload in early intervention services as well as properly streamlining transition to school-based services to prevent undue burden on the public school system. Again, this is simply not possible without First 5 funded programs.

Savannah Strange

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:14:32 AM

North Central
Districts 2, 3, 4

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

A comment from a family who wished to stay anonymous:

“I am so grateful for the first five San Diego staff. As a single mom of two kids with a limited support system, I have appreciated the kindness and wisdom of the staff members at Rady’s C3. They have provided me and my children with information, insight, and practical strategies to assist my children in their continued development. These services are invaluable to families and are often not covered by insurance. I hope to continue to utilize their services until both of my children complete kindergarten.”

Holly Arnold

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:32 PM

To: Hays, Karen <Karen.Hays@sdcounty.ca.gov>; Javier, Lenette <Lenette.Javier@sdcounty.ca.gov>

Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

meeting date 3/25/25

Please review my submission below, thank you.

Colleen OConnor

<https://first5sandiego.org/index.php?gf-download=2025%2F03%2FMeeting-on3.25.25.pdf&form-id=5&field-id=14&hash=d03ecf110e352df031ed48093ad7bdc41a281e804cf6d8d730bb76347d1e3af4>

From: [Jennifer Kennedy](#)
To: [FGG, Public Comment](#)
Subject: [External] Support for Agenda Item #15
Date: Tuesday, May 20, 2025 8:41:22 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image008.png](#)
[Agenda Item 15 Support Testimony May 20 25 upload.pdf](#)

Hello,

I am submitting comments supporting funding for Healthy Development Services that were submitted to First 5 Commission of San Diego for their March 25 Commission Meeting.

Please find attached a packet of family and provider public comments from throughout San Diego. Where known, we have identified the District in which the service was received or provided.

Thank you in advance for including this packet in today's May 20 Board of Supervisors public comment.

Respectfully,
Jennifer

Jennifer Kennedy (she/her)

Associate Project Director

American Academy of Pediatrics, California Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3)

jkennedy@aapca3.org

aapca3.org



HDS Testimony

for the

First 5 San Diego

Commission Meeting

March 25, 2025

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 12:23:18 PM

03/18/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Submitted on behalf of a caregiver that wished to remain anonymous: "My experience with first 5 has been the best. I am beyond grateful for the HDS program and everything that it has done for our family. HDS has helped us significantly in understanding our children and trying to navigate their development! I would definitely recommend it to lots of families for multiple reasons. One being that they truly care for the families that they are helping."

Holly Arnold

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/14/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For March 25 meeting

Hi, I am a community pediatrician at Neighborhood Health in Escondido, California. We are in the North Inland region for First 5 services. I wanted to express my unwavering support for all the benefits of this program. We serve a predominantly poor and indigent population with many barriers to health and childhood adverse experiences, almost all with Medi-Cal insurance or uninsured. I can recall numerous patients of my own who have benefitted enormously from participating in our local program's services. We regularly have babies with plagiocephaly (misshapen heads from lack of tummy time or stiff neck) and delay motor skills, and early intervention is key to preventing the need for a head-shaping molding helmet. The rate of developmental delays in children is around 20-30%, and we routinely refer for speech delay in children who are not meeting even the backstop parameters, such as at least putting 2 words together by 2 years, or 3 word phrases by 3 years, or kids who still have unintelligible speech by 4 years. These kids benefit so much from the evaluation and speech services offered – especially since the children with milder-moderate delays who are not picked up by official early intervention services (0-3, Regional Center), fall through the cracks, and have to wait until 3 years for a school district evaluation – and qualifying at the school depends so much on the resources available in that district. And for the little ones, waiting until they can be seen after age 3 is not appropriate – the early brains of kids are primed and wired to interventions precisely at this time. This applies to the kids with sensory and behavior issues, and the parenting support is invaluable in not only positive outcomes, but preventing future depression, abuse, and stress on the family as a unit due to neurodiverse kids as a population. And the case management benefits help our families who already have so many barriers such as parents who don't speak English to navigate the healthcare and school systems, and have regularly provided assistance in helping our speech delayed kids eventually qualify at the district when appropriate. The community building of relationships with other agencies generates trust and First 5 Healthy Development Services with Palomar Health is absolutely trusted by local preschools, DSEP (foster kids), and physicians alike. While there is no manual for helping to raise healthy children, First 5 is certainly a much needed tool in our area to help us raise healthy and loving families. I hope you will consider this in funding decisions and continue to direct support to First 5.

Sincerely,
Dr Byron Chow MD

Byron Chow

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/14/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Please see attached analogy regarding the impact of HDS on the community. This analogy aims to describe what "needy" means in relation to the work we do.

Holly Arnold

<https://first5sandiego.org/index.php?gf-download=2025%2F03%2FHealthy-Development-Services-A-Lagoon-Story.pdf&form-id=5&field-id=14&hash=cbce9f4f694fb18f889aa88ed736b6c8e2f71081abbfa3a1e85206ea8c9ed773>

Healthy Development Services

San Diego's Community Lagoon: An Analogy

Written by: Holly Arnold and Jen Goins



A LAGOON IS A
NATURAL SAFETY
NET FROM A LARGE,
EMPTY BODY OF
WATER TO A
DEVELOPED AND
RESOURCED AREA

Important Facts About Lagoons:

They provide **habitats** for many animals and plants | They **offer valuable natural resources** to people living and working in those areas | Coastal lagoons are seasonally **productive ecosystems** | Play an important role in **mitigating the consequences** of coastal flooding

HDS provides a protective lagoon for children and families that don't have a place in other "habitats"

In the "large bodies of water" surrounding the "lagoon", you can find higher-income families and/or families with no developmental concerns. These families have the means to access the resources available to them on the "land" or they are not in need. They are able to pay the fees associated, have position and power to advocate for themselves, and have resources readily available.

In the "land" outside the "lagoon", low-income families and/or families with moderate-to-severe developmental needs have access to services like home visiting programs, subsidized childcare, free health care, insurance, CAES, and the School District.

Families who are not in either of these situations are truly those in highest needs and need the safety of the HDS "lagoon".



San Elijo Lagoon

HDS provides a resource to children and families who live in the "lagoon"

- **Care Coordination** to support families navigate the often-difficult process of getting to the "land" where higher level services reside
- **Bridging** support for families while they are in the process of accessing higher level services and navigating getting to the right place
- **Resource** for community programs, schools, and healthcare providers to supplement the support they provide to their families and act as a partner



San Dieguito Lagoon

HDS plays a role in mitigating the consequences of system "flooding"

When children receive services through HDS prior to entering school, they **may not need to access special education or insurance-based services**, which are highly impacted. This leaves room for children with more moderate-to-severe needs to benefit from these higher levels of care.



Carlisbad Lagoon

Preventative education with families at HDS leads to confident and healthy caregiving, as evidenced by program outcomes which shows an increase in supportive behaviors such as spending time together, reading together, etc. We know based on evidenced-based research that **children with these protective factors in place will have more protection from ACEs as they grow up.**

Families who understand these protective factors based on their time with HDS **may have more resources to lean on in times of need, reducing need for access to higher-level supports (social service programs, school services).**

Without the HDS Lagoon as a safety net, we will be moving the needle away from serving the neediest and leaving a vulnerable population with no resources

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

North Coastal/
North Inland
District 5

03/11/2025

First 5 San Diego Finance Committee

Hello,

I wanted to take a moment to express our deep gratitude for the partnership we have with First 5 and the critical role that the Healthy Development Services play in our pediatric office and within our community.

The early years of a child's life are absolutely vital for their long-term health and well-being. Through First 5's support, we've been able to provide essential services for our patients under the age of 5, helping them reach developmental milestones and address health concerns that could otherwise go unnoticed or untreated. The resources and programs made available to us through First 5 have not only benefited individual children but have contributed significantly to the health of the entire community.

We've seen firsthand how these services empower families to navigate the often complex healthcare system, ensuring that even the most vulnerable children receive the care and attention they need. Without these resources, we fear that many children would miss out on early intervention that could have lifelong implications on their health, development, and educational outcomes.

We hope that the importance of early childhood health services continues to be recognized and prioritized. Reducing funding for these services would have a direct impact on our ability to support families and children in need, leading to long-term consequences that could be difficult to reverse. We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work alongside First 5 and advocate for the well-being of children in our community.

Gratefully,

Marlene Xochical, Child Development Specialist at TrueCare Pediatrics

Marlene Xochical

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:30:14 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Funding Discussion presentation

Hello, my name is Courtney Baltiyskyy. I am a mother of two young kids in Chula Vista and an advocate for children, youth, and their families. Within this commitment I work with the YMCA and help lead the Children First Collective, a group of organizations and leaders tackling the challenges of access to affordable, quality child care. One of our commitments is mental and behavior health for kids and their caregivers. First 5 plays an instrumental role in this and is now in grave jeopardy. We thank the First 5 San Diego Commission for their steadfast work to consider the budget with an equity-based approach, mitigating the risk of losing services for those who need it the most. With a spirit of collaboration and impact evidence, San Diego has an opportunity to innovate and share the funding responsibility across new government entities, agencies, and philanthropy.

First 5 San Diego programs contribute to and absolutely enhance sustainability in the areas of child and family well-being, the environment, and the economy. I want to draw attention to the profound support offered to parents and caregivers for behavioral screenings, developmental delay screenings, and treatment for over 27,000 0-5 year olds through the Healthy Development Services program. First 5 San Diego and partners have done this important work with the resources available. Testimonials from families in First 5's reports truly showcase the transformative change experienced with this support. First 5 San Diego data is transparent and accessible. However, many families continue to experience long waiting lists, delays in assessment, and a lack of direct services. This is concerning, and the worry in lack of resources only compounds when considering the projected and significant decrease of funding from the state and local district funding. When considering mental health equity and well-being in San Diego, we have to choose to care for a true continuum – from young children to the adults who care for them. I ask you to do all you can to guarantee funding for HDS in your final decisions.

Courtney Baltiyskyy

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 1:53:27 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

March 25 Agenda item 2 (discussion of funding reductions)

HDS has been the first line of referral for hundreds of physicians caring for thousands of children with mild to moderate delays. Any change (although necessary) will disrupt hard wired workflows that ensure a rapid response for children. HDS also gets referrals and supports children with more severe delays, taking the supportive role of ensuring parents are ready to act upon the referrals for intensive intervention their child needs. With the new dyadic care benefit, some of these services (such as behavior/mental health support) are fundable. However, staffing will need to change and will become more expensive. Patient access representatives are more expensive than admin's who schedule appointments and triage families without having or needing knowledge of funding streams, authorization processes and registration in the EHR. Likewise the process to bill can cost more than the FFS reimbursement by Medi-Cal. For example, a speech therapy visit may be reimbursed at 44.00/visit and it may cost 35.00 to drop the bill. The cost of that speech therapist (SLP) is about 58.00+/hr with benefits and no other overhead costs added (test protocols, scoring programs, time in report writing, etc.). Similarly, a Dyadic Behavioral Health (DBH) visit is provided by a licensed mental health therapist (or a supervised associate therapist) which costs the same or upwards from the cost of an SLP. The DBH visit reimburses at 116.00, and other services such as psychoeducational work with parent or coordination of referrals each pay a FFS rate of 20.00/15 min. These codes are available only for Medi-Cal insured children. Other children, such as those in HMOs (e.g., Sharp Rees Stealy), most likely will not be authorized, and yet time translates to dollars spent in the effort that goes into this denial that results in no service, and no funding.

It makes sense to maximize billing and payment opportunities. Revenues are declining and something must change. However a careful fiscal analysis is needed to evaluate the shift in costs to include a different level of support, use of the EHR for registration, billing and reporting, and to accommodate licensed and licensable, billable staff with appropriate supervision. Many bilingual, bicultural child development specialists need to be laid off, while bilingual, bicultural licensed staff are difficult to find and recruit. The risk is that the funding cuts will result in losing a team's diversity, and will increase costs, although certainly, with regard to behavior services, this change must be explored to take advantage of dyadic care services now being reimbursed by the State. Might you consider starting with Behavior Services. Based upon experience with HealthySteps, I would expect this transition to billable services will take a year as programs transition to systems and a workforce that fits the new model. Is there the possibility of a funding commitment, with a hard timeline, to bridge the gap while the more sustainable funding streams are addressed?

As an aside, how do we ensure the child development specialists we lose transition to roles that increase child care slots (and will compensation be comparable?), so that we don't lose this talent?

Kristin Gist

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:27:52 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5
(Escondido)

03/20/2025

Other - If Other, provide details in narrative below.

For the March 25th meeting

HDS has made a large positive impact on the lives of the families I serve in the North San Diego area. It's truly incomprehensible to imagine a decrease in their services being considered. Please allow these vital services continue for our community.

Kelly Lewis, Public Health Nurse

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:41:52 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

HDS has been an essential part of supporting families. Many clients who are of lower socioeconomic status are dependent on the services that HSD provides. It is crucial that HDS remains intact with their current funding to help them serve the underserved communities and provide better outcomes for the children in need and ultimately, the families as a whole.

Letisha Kingsbury

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:32:45 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

As a public health nurse with COSD, I am eager to voice my support for HDS. HDS services are invaluable to families throughout San Diego County. HDS services are essential to ensuring every child has the opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive. HDS provides critical early intervention services for developmental delays to support community members at risk of poor outcomes. Cutting funding for HDS will decrease resources available to countless children, leaving them without services to reach full potential, disproportionately affecting those from underserved communities. I feel that we as a community should all advocate for and have a moral obligation to invest in children's health and development. Sincerely, Mischa Denton

Mischa Denton

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:31:42 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

I am beyond appreciative of the assistance and support my daughter and myself are receiving from Healthy Services. As a single mother who is learning how to navigate life with a toddler who learns differently than her peers - I am thankful that I am able to receive the support and education to further assist her. I do not know where I would have needed to start looking for help had it not been for them, to defund them would be a great loss for the entire community.

Stephanie Johnson

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 4:22:26 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

This comment is in regards to the funding cuts to the Healthy Development Services program.

I am writing to you both as a concerned early childhood educator and a concerned parent. I am a director of a preschool in Carlsbad and I hold a MA degree in early childhood education. I am also a mom of four children under age five, one of which has personally benefited from this program.

At our preschool, we have had the pleasure of hosting parenting classes at our site thanks to this program. When we have a child who is struggling, this program is our first line for offering support and education for the families we serve. This program is unique in that it really is a full family support program, not just services for the child. So many families have concerns about behavior, routine, discipline, and other parenting challenges but don't have a lot of places to turn for answers. Pediatrician appointments are quick and rarely go into detail about these concerns. Finding answers online is a nightmare - everybody has 10 different answers to every problem and it is very difficult to parse out what is evidence based and how to implement solutions for their unique family. The nature of this program has also been beneficial because parents who are resistant to acknowledging that their child needs support have been more receptive to this type of program as opposed to a higher level such as the school district.

As someone who has been in the education field for over ten years, I can honestly say we need programs like this more than ever before. Since the covid-19 pandemic we have seen an increase in challenging behaviors and emotional regulation difficulties, delays in development, toilet training challenges, and parental stress. What we have not seen is an increase in IFSP/IEPs, which shows that while the challenges parents are facing are mounting, the support for these families has not followed the same trend. This is one of the few programs that meets this need and I worry about how this will affect us personally and as a society.

My own son is one of the many children benefiting from this program. My child struggles with emotional regulation and sensory processing, but he does not have a diagnosis that would warrant an IEP. After going through the support courses offered by HDS, we were referring to play therapy right after my son turned 3. I was so excited that my son would be able to receive this support because there isn't a whole lot out there for the kids who need some extra support but don't need enough to warrant district services. So often parents will try to get their children support through the school district but they don't qualify immediately and that critical window of the first five years closes before they are even able to secure a diagnosis. You can imagine my frustration and heartbreak when we found out, after only three sessions, that funding was being cut and we wouldn't be receiving the full 26 sessions. There is a clear and powerful message in this decision: kids like my son, the ones not "bad off" enough for IEPs, don't

matter. We are supposed to stand by, watch our children struggle, and wait until they are finally behind enough to warrant higher levels of intervention as opposed to giving them much needed support to possibly prevent reaching that level. By the time they reach this level they are behind academically and emotionally and often carry the stigma that comes with being the more challenging child. This decision goes against the plethora of research that supports the first five years being the best time to offer support to children and puts children in a position to be constantly playing catch up.

This decision will cause the achievement gap between socioeconomic groups to widen. Like many families, we are not in a position to pay for private services. More often than not, insurance requires a diagnosis to cover any services and still fights tooth and nail to provide as little support as they can get away with. With economic pressures increasing and no sign of relief coming anytime soon, now is not the time to turn our backs on these families.

I strongly urge you to consider the long-term consequences of children and families losing access to this support. As a society, we all suffer when individuals do not learn healthy emotional regulation or have the support they need to be secure, productive members of society.

I appreciate your time and consideration regarding this matter.

Sami Neblett

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 5:38:38 PM

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

Dear members of the First 5 San Diego Commission,

As a nurse working with families with children ages 0-3 years old in San Diego, I have been so grateful for the services provided by Healthy Development Services (HDS). HDS not only provides early detection and intervention services, but they have been able to connect and engage with families that have barriers to care such as a lack of transportation, language barriers, low income, or uninsured. The classes they offer educate families on developmental and behavioral expectations and ways to support their child's development and promote secure attachment. HDS is a vital resource in our community. Please consider maintaining current level funding for HDS.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Nilsen, RN, PHN

Stephanie Nilsen

To Whom It May Concern,

I am deeply concerned to hear that the Healthy Development Services program is considering cutting funding for essential resources that many families and children across San Diego County rely on. Reducing these services would be a tremendous disservice to our community. With lasting effects that will take a toll on the well-being of our community.

Allow me to introduce myself: I am a mother of five children, all of whom were born and raised in North County. I chose this area to raise my family because of the strong sense of community. Two of my children are biological, and three are adopted. My youngest, who was born prematurely, required swallowing therapy through county services. Without the financial support provided by these programs, I would not have been able to afford the care my child needed. As a mother, my only job is to provide safety and security for my children, and knowing I had resources and therapists advocating for us made all the difference. Thanks to those services, my daughter is now 21 years old, attending college, and leading a relatively typical life.

I am also a preschool director with 40 years of experience in early education. I work at a local nonprofit school and am actively involved in serving and connecting with our community every day. Through my work, I witness firsthand the positive impact of services like those offered by Healthy Development. For example, First 5 has come to our school to conduct hearing and vision screenings. Over the years, I have referred countless parents to First 5 for support and resources. And to be very honest with you I have a family in that I'm going to refer to First 5 next week when they are home from vacation. The 2-year-old boy has a very limited vocabulary (about 10 words such as mama) and frequently gets upset when his classmates don't understand him. This is so hard to watch because he wants to communicate with his friends but is unable to right now. The best part about this situation is once this child receives speech therapy his life will become easier and it's a matter of a couple of years when we see him talking and effectively communicating with those around him, so he too can live a relatively typical life.

The resources provided by Healthy Development Services are vital to the well-being of our community. Cutting them would be a great loss to the children and families who depend on these programs to thrive. I am asking you to please reconsider making cuts to his program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Colleen O'Connor, Co-Director of Pilgrims Children's Center



From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 8:18:38 AM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

Item C

To the esteemed members of the First 5 Commission:

I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of robust early intervention services through HDS as well as the invaluable role they play in partnership with school districts. Early intervention is not merely a program; it is a fundamental investment in the future of children, families, and community.

The developmental years are a period of rapid growth and neural plasticity. Early identification and intervention during this crucial window can significantly alter a child's trajectory, preventing the escalation of challenges into more complex and costly needs later in life. By addressing developmental delays, learning disabilities, and behavioral concerns early on, they empower children to reach their full potential, fostering academic success, social-emotional well-being, and overall health.

Early intervention services are not limited to addressing individual needs. A truly effective approach supports the "whole child" and the "whole family." By providing comprehensive services, including educational support, therapeutic interventions, and family resources, they create a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes holistic development. This approach strengthens families, equips them with essential tools, and fosters resilience, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more stable community.

Furthermore, HDS plays a crucial role in preventing the need for more intensive and costly services in later years. By addressing challenges early, they reduce the likelihood of academic failure, behavioral difficulties, and reliance on specialized services throughout a child's educational journey and beyond. This proactive approach is not only ethically sound but also fiscally responsible. Investing in early intervention is an investment in a brighter and healthier future for everyone. It is a commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. By prioritizing early intervention through HDS and fostering strong community partnerships, they can create a more equitable and supportive environment for all our children and families. Any reduction in funding will be detrimental to the futures of the children they serve and to educational outcomes in the future.

Amanda Carlson

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:48:31 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

HDS is a wonderful program that assists with childhood development. With less funding, many families will be affected. Development is essential when children grow up as it affects them holistically--gross development, fine development, communication, and problem solving, and social strengths. With what physicians can do in a span of an hour in a yearly basis. HDS can do weekly or even more depending on the need or acuity. HDS assists in child development even before they go into pre-school to make sure they aren't behind developmentally. HDS improves confidence for not only the child, but also for families. A wealth of knowledge is given at the home through HDS and the work they do. Reduction in funding would be a disservice for all the assistance and support they do for the community.

Arielle Lamuna

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 10:18:43 AM

North Inland
District 2

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting

Dear San Diego Commision,

I am a Public Health Nurse from the North Inland Region, and I make use of this resource for our at-risk families and their children.

HDS has mastered the process of efficiently and effectively outreach, identify, address, and obtain results through supporting children's development and parental skills over so many years of serving the community. HDS has supported several of our programs consisted of families at risk, teens, first time mothers, babies with mild to moderate delays, and struggling parents in need of learning basic skills to support their children's healthy growth, increase self-efficacy, independence, and improve families' health outcomes.

It is an established and proven model that includes and opens access to hard-to-find interdisciplinary experts that can efficiently address important issues at home and on time before becoming a bigger threat to each child, parent, family, and the community. Everyone I have referred to this resource has reported success at alleviating and addressing important concerns, improving skills, improving activities of daily living, and overall health outcomes for their entire family. The HDS program has also been a strong liaison for families at risk needing further additional resources.

Diana Becerra

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Watson, Hunter](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:30:06 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th Meeting

As a Speech Language Pathologist currently working at HDS, I believe it's crucial to share my experiences across various settings and highlight the importance of the Healthy Development Services (HDS) program. One of the most frustrating aspects of my career has been seeing children who are in desperate need of speech and language support, yet are unable to access care for various reasons. These barriers may include lack of insurance, insurance denial for evaluation or treatment, prohibitively high co-pays, or the child's delays not being significant enough to qualify through their school district, among others. HDS steps in to support these children and families, ensuring they receive the services they need when they otherwise would not receive them. Early intervention is vital for a child's success, not only in the short term but for their lifelong development.

I began my journey at HDS during grad school and spent the next six years working in private practice, always with the goal of returning to HDS. Why? Because I realized then, and continue to see now, how unique and important this program is, offering services to families at no-cost.

Given the critical role HDS plays in supporting children and families who would otherwise go without necessary care, I urge decision-makers to consider the significant impact of this program when making funding decisions. Investing in early intervention through HDS is an investment in the long-term success and well-being of these children and, ultimately, our community

Heidi Leininger

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Watson, Hunter](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:30:08 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

First 5 San Diego Commission Public Comment in Support of HDS

I am grateful for the opportunity to bring to your attention one of the ways a reduction in funding to Healthy Development Services (HDS) will have a substantial impact on our communities, particularly in the North Inland region.

The importance of having developmental services such as speech, occupational and physical therapy offered through HDS is critical given the considerable barriers families in our communities face. Children who have Medi-Cal coverage, which is approximately 83% in the North Inland region, are largely authorized to Rady Children's in San Diego. Obstacles such as high gas costs and distances families must travel to access those services contribute to the existing challenge of asking for time off work. Additionally, wait lists for those insurance funded services will inevitably grow due to the decrease of available developmental therapies in HDS as a result of a decrease in funding. Our rural communities of Fallbrook, Ramona, Julian, Borrego, Valley Center/Pauma Valley, and Santa Isabel already experience hardship in accessing essential services, necessitating trips to Escondido. Traveling to San Diego and even Oceanside adds further strain on these families, particularly for working parents and caregivers with less flexibility. Many of our immigrant families are already experiencing fear in even traveling outside their own neighborhoods.

We value the relationships we have established with our external early intervention partners through our regional school districts and the San Diego Regional Center. Together, our efforts in supporting families by either providing services or linking eligible children beyond HDS, ensures that no child falls through the cracks.

Thank you for allowing me to share this information and for your commitment to the health and development of young children. Your consideration of these concerns as you make decisions regarding funding is profoundly appreciated.

Tara Dominguez

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 5:09 PM
To: HHSA, First5SDInfo <First5SDInfo.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: [External] Contact Us Form Submission

Name

Amy Cisneros-Leon

Email

[REDACTED]

Subject

Healthy Development Services

Message

These services have been of great help and value to me. Thanks to these services I was able to get the much needed help that I need as a mother with anxiety and depression. When these services came into my life I was in a very dark place and they helped me get through it and for that I am forever grateful.

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:18:50 PM

North Inland
Districts 2 & 5

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

This program helped to create a safe space for me and my family, especially for me. We lost our insurance and unfortunately, I was unable to get the help that I needed for my mental state as well as physical. First five helped me during this time that seemed very dark. They helped provide resources, they stayed on top of my care when I was struggling to manage my life as a new parent, they reached out consistently to see if I needed anything or if there was any resource available to us and without them I don't think I'd be in the place where I am today. My family has benefited from the help we received and I was able to have a better relationship with my daughter and she is surpassing milestones thanks to the help we received and the care from our team. Thank you to everyone at the office who helped my family thrive.

Michelle Espinoza

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 3:48 PM

To: Watson, Hunter <Hunter.Watson@sdcounty.ca.gov>

Subject: [External] First 5 E-Comment Received

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

March 25 meeting

Through First 5 I've been able to get the mental health help I needed without having to worry about the out of pocket expenses. I was still dealing with a mountain of anxiety and depression on top of lasting postpartum depression. Therapy with Caroline has helped me to give myself grace and by providing an outlet for me, I am able to be a better person for my family. Therapy has also helped me cope and adjust with the multiple therapies my son is currently undergoing with his being high risk for autism.

With the help of First 5, I have less bad days and am able to enjoy my family more.

Melody Bucayan

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 11:37:17 AM

North Central
Districts 2, 3, 4

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I would just like to express how helpful the First 5/C3 program has been for myself and my son. This program was made available for us because my son had spent time in the NICU and I was referred to this program. The staff at first 5 are so helpful and so knowledgeable and really helped me as a first time mom. The program offers great resources and support for parents. Having First 5 as a resource has been so helpful in navigating toddlerhood! The in person classes they offered for my son were great. He thrived there and the staff really took the time to observe him and make recommendations for things to work on with him at home, based on his temperament . I was given tools to be better parent and it has helped me so much. I also watched other kids in the class progress and I know that other parents felt supported by the staff. I think this is such a great program and resource and any parent would be lucky to have to work with this team. Thank you!

Olivia Lavallee

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 11:53:24 AM

North Central
Districts 2, 3, 4

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I support continued funding for all First 5 programs. Many families in San Diego have used and relied on these services as a source of support, information, and intervention from their children. As a speech therapist at Rady Children's Hospital, I greatly appreciate the work at First 5 does in meeting the communication and behavior needs of children with mild to moderate impairments. These children would face very long waitlists to access care at our clinics. Insurance can also be a barrier for them.

I appreciate your consideration of keeping all Forst 5 programs fully funded.

Catherine Dabasinskas

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 1:53:19 PM

North Central
District 3

03/19/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

The parenting advisory services offered through Rady's have been a complete game-changer for our relationship with our child. Following the provided advice and recommendations has enabled us to have a stronger relationship, and really allowed our child to flourish in both sensory regulation and interactions with his peers.

This service has been a turning point in the raising of our children, and we are better prepared to be great parents in the future. No other 'parent help' services or guides have had this big of an impact, this fast. Losing this service would be a tragedy for the parents and children of San Diego.

Andrew Hawk

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM

Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/14/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

The program was excellent and has really provided me insight on the development of my child. The resources have allowed me to better help my child improve in areas such as social, motor, and communication skills. I would highly recommend it to other parents.

Grace Bernardo

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM

Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/13/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

I think this program is absolutely essential to any child's development. Not all parents have what it takes to properly evaluate and help their children grow and succeed. This gives everyone an opportunity to learn developmental skills from a professional. I think this program should be continued and fully supported at all costs.

Jacques Pieterse

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:10 PM
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

North Inland
District 5

03/17/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

March 25

Dear Commission:

As a pediatric nurse practitioner and a parent of two boys who are high functioning on the Autism Spectrum Disorder, I sincerely hope you consider the impact of any reduction of services to children with developmental delays. To a child with development (fine, gross, social/emotional) delays, early services (PT, OT, speech and behavioral interventions) are critical to provide during the first few years of life. I can professionally and personally attest to the life-changing impact services can make on children. It can literally make the difference between a child who learns to function appropriately in a classroom before they attend so they can learn and going through life behind from the very beginning. Please avoid any cuts to these programs. In a perfect world, all children who need them would receive them and we are far away from covering even most children adequately.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Warmest Regards,
Tammy

--

Tamara Troyer Denlinger, Doctor of Nursing Practice, C-PNP, C-FNP



Tamara Denlinger

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:50:44 AM

03/21/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

For the March 25th meeting.

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing this with a heavy heart. I am an RN with a practice that serves some of the most vulnerable in our community. Over the last 12 years, I have relied upon First 5 for their comprehensive support for children and their families. They have never failed to exhaust all resources to provide life-changing services. Not only do I hear gratitude and relief from parents trying to meet their children's needs, but I see the remarkable progress being made by the children. As parents, we all want our children to thrive, but beyond that, as citizens we have an obligation to simply do the right thing!

Children are our future. Any reduction in funding for this program is a conscious decision to jeopardize not only these children and their families, but also the foundation of our future. I implore you to consider the value of the services provided by First 5 and the significant return on investment.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter, Kathy Snyder, BSN, RN, PHN.

Kathleen Snyder

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:27:26 AM

County-wide

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

I am writing to support continued funding directly to the First 5 Commission of San Diego. I recently moved to San Diego from Boston, Massachusetts, and have noticed the differences in the quality of early intervention services almost immediately. The early intervention and parent training provided by First 5 is a gold standard of care which I had only ever read about in textbooks and scientific articles before becoming a resident of San Diego. These services are an essential public health effort to support the long-term success of at-risk and disabled youth across their lifespan. For example, I will be discharging a 2 year old from individual speech/language treatment at the end of this month who received services through First 5 and would not have been ready for discharge without it. There is a clear and strong research basis for these interventions and their continued implementation is vital to the continued success of child and disability services throughout all of San Diego. When I am able to successfully discharge a child from therapy at two years old, I am then able to see even more children under 3 who are in need of evidence based early invention treatment. This reduces the caseload in early intervention services as well as properly streamlining transition to school-based services to prevent undue burden on the public school system. Again, this is simply not possible without First 5 funded programs.

Savannah Strange

From: [First 5 San Diego](#)
To: [Hays, Karen](#); [Javier, Lenette](#)
Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:14:32 AM

North Central
Districts 2, 3, 4

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Commission

A comment from a family who wished to stay anonymous:

“I am so grateful for the first five San Diego staff. As a single mom of two kids with a limited support system, I have appreciated the kindness and wisdom of the staff members at Rady’s C3. They have provided me and my children with information, insight, and practical strategies to assist my children in their continued development. These services are invaluable to families and are often not covered by insurance. I hope to continue to utilize their services until both of my children complete kindergarten.”

Holly Arnold

From: First 5 San Diego <notifications@first5sandiego.org>

Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:32 PM

To: Hays, Karen <Karen.Hays@sdcounty.ca.gov>; Javier, Lenette <Lenette.Javier@sdcounty.ca.gov>

Subject: [External] First 5 Commission Feedback/Question Received

03/20/2025

First 5 San Diego Staff, Commission & Finance Committee

meeting date 3/25/25

Please review my submission below, thank you.

Colleen OConnor

<https://first5sandiego.org/index.php?gf-download=2025%2F03%2FMeeting-on3.25.25.pdf&form-id=5&field-id=14&hash=d03ecf110e352df031ed48093ad7bdc41a281e804cf6d8d730bb76347d1e3af4>