



For Immediate Release

January 11, 2019

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Forecast for Early Childhood Looks Bright

Governor Newsom's budget priorities align with local Monterey County efforts to address growing needs for families with young children

In a significant step, Governor Gavin Newsom put forth a 2019/2020 budget that proposes more than a \$2 billion investment in early childhood programs. Newsom's proposal looks to boost funding to increase kindergarten to full-day, expand pre-kindergarten programs over the course of three years, provide more professional development options for child care providers, grow home visits to expectant parents, and support programs that provide healthcare screenings for young children. He also wants to extend paid family leave. Governor Newsom was clear that these efforts will take time because California children deserve quality education and the infrastructure of our educational system needs to continue to build.

"We want to commend Governor Newsom for looking at programming and resources for children with a holistic lens—this budget proposal demonstrates an understanding that learning starts before birth," stated Francine Rodd, Executive Director of First 5 Monterey County. "Monterey County is in a unique position. A growing momentum is happening around early childhood but funding has always been a significant barrier. It is great to see that the state and our county have the potential to be aligned and our communities have the chance to access more resources. With a growing focus on children ages 0 to 5 and their families, we look forward to working with this administration to ensure that what we know about early childhood quality—including appropriate class size and teacher-child ratios, age appropriate approaches, and multiple provider options—is included."

The County of Monterey hosted a community engagement process in 2018 where constituents identified early learning and preschool programs as top priorities—something that local advocates weren't surprised to hear and are happy to see reflected at the state level under the new Governor.

Collective efforts around early childhood have been gaining momentum in the broader community over the past several years. The countywide early childhood initiative, Bright

Binnings, supports collaborative work around early childhood by bringing diverse leaders together. Recently, the group completed a comprehensive strategic framework that looks to address early childhood needs on a holistic level. They have also supported grassroots efforts in Salinas around Preschool for All.

First 5 Monterey County continues to grow home visiting programs, developmental screenings, and capacity building for the early childhood workforce. Also, newly appointed Monterey County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Deneen Guss has said one of her goals is to expand access to early care and education. Further, the City of Gonzales recently included early childhood in the health element of their general plan.

“Expanded investments in early childhood are coming at the right time for us. The needs are growing and local agencies have collectively identified key strategies to achieve tangible results for young children,” stated Rodd. “More funding from the state—and hopefully other sources--can help bolster this work and support families.”

The proposed budget still has to pass both the State Senate and Assembly with final approval by Newsom needed by the end of June. Early childhood advocates see these next five months as a time for everyone—individuals and organizations—to share their voice with state leaders about local experiences and needs around support for early learning and care.

About First 5 Monterey County

For two decades, First 5 Monterey County has partnered with community agencies to support efforts in providing quality services for families with children ages prenatal through five. We have also worked to increase early childhood funding and inspire policies and practices that help meet the needs of young children and their families. First 5 is also the fiscal sponsor for the Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Development Initiative as part of a communitywide effort to work together to ensure that young children, from the prenatal stage through age 8, have what they need to succeed. This collective effort leads to our vision that all children reach their unique potential in a family and community that values, respects, and invests in early childhood. For more information, visit www.First5Monterey.org.

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