



California Children and Families Commission Meeting

October 28, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Agenda Item 1 – Opening Remarks

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Commissioners Present: Nadine Burke Harris
Molly Munger
Mayra Alvarez
Shana Hazan
Jackie Majors
Elsa Jimenez

Commissioners Absent: Monica Fitzgerald

Ex Officio Member Present: Kris Perry

Announcements

Chair Burke Harris opened the meeting by welcoming back Commissioner Alvarez, who had been away on maternity leave, and congratulated her on her new baby girl. She then announced that the meeting is potentially the last meeting for Commissioners Munger and Fitzgerald before their terms expire in December 2021. Chair Burke Harris also announced Ms. Stafford Jones is leaving the First 5 Association after being appointed as the Director for the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative at the California Health and Human Services Agency.

Melissa Stafford Jones, First 5 Association Executive Director

Ms. Stafford Jones presented the First 5 Association Strategic Plan for 2022–24. She explained the process of developing the Strategic Plan and emphasized the importance of the local First 5s working together with the First 5 Association and First 5 California toward a larger goal.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioners congratulated Commissioner Alvarez on her new baby. Commissioners also congratulated Ms. Stafford Jones on her new position, and for completing the Strategic Plan. Commissioners took time to show appreciation for Commissioners Munger and Fitzgerald.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment

Hugo Morales, First 5 Fresno: Mr. Morales thanked Commissioner Munger for her years on the Commission and her efforts working on behalf of children and families. He discussed investments made in Fresno to support early education.

Annette Kunzman: Ms. Kunzman brought attention to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and asked that adverse childhood experiences screenings be used to flag the potential for fetal alcohol exposure so children and families can begin to get the support they need.

Brenda Hardaway: Ms. Hardaway mentioned she is excited to hear about all the work the Commission is doing.

Jessie Tientcheu: Mr. Tientcheu talked about Opening Doors and their support for Afghan refugees, particularly those who resettled in the Sacramento area.

Action Item 3 – Consent Calendar

MOTION/ACTION: Commissioner Majors moved to approve the Consent Calendar. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hazan.

VOTE: The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission. Commissioner Alvarez was absent.

Information Item 4 – Financial Update

Marcia Thomas, Director of Fiscal Services, provided an update on First 5 California's (F5CA) financial status and brought forward the idea to schedule a budget retreat in 2022 to discuss future programmatic investments.

Discussion

Member Perry noted there is a trend showing an increase in smoking as a result of increased stress due to the pandemic and asked staff to track this trend to try and predict long-term changes in F5CA revenue, if possible.

Public comment:

None.

Action Item 5 – Adoption of a North Star Statement

The members of the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, Commissioners Hazan and Jimenez, briefly spoke about the meetings they had with staff to assist with the development of the North Star Statement and the white paper that helps to frame the thinking behind the statement. Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, F5CA Chief Deputy Director, presented the new North Star Statement and discussed the efforts from staff and other collaborators that went into the development.

Discussion

Commissioner Majors opened the discussion by asking about including language around education, so that the statement covers more than just the health aspect. Commissioner Hazan noted that the word “systems” is also meant to encapsulate the early childhood education system. She mentioned that in order to make this clearer, education could be mentioned specifically in the final version of the white paper.

Public Comment

None.

MOTION/ACTION: Chair Burke Harris moved to approve the North Star Statement as follows:

“Trauma-informed, healing-centered, and culturally responsive systems promote the safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments necessary to eliminate inequities and ensure healthy development for all children.”

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jimenez.

VOTE: The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission. Commissioner Alvarez was absent.

Action Item 6 – Refugee Family Support

Max Vargas, Deputy Director, External and Governmental Affairs Office, presented a request for funding to provide support for refugee families resettling in counties throughout the state. He discussed the background and purpose of the item, noting the issues refugees face after fleeing Afghanistan following U.S. military withdrawal from the region. Mr. Vargas introduced partners from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to further discuss the supports that are currently available to refugee families and where there are gaps in the system.

Discussion

Commissioner Hazan opened the discussion by citing her experience in working with resettlement agencies and noted the issues surrounding the refugees are no different from the broader immigrant population, but that refugee families have more government support than other immigrants. She expressed concern that the proposed funding might be too quick of a reaction. Mr. Vargas responded that the broader reason for providing more support is due to the large influx of refugees coming to the region. Commissioner Hazan suggested

amending the motion so that some money could be distributed for immediate needs, and the remainder of the funds could be used to work toward systems change in future years. Commissioner Majors mentioned she would be interested in hearing more information on what supports are currently available to refugee families. Elaine Kaimowitz, from CDSS, added context for what supports are normally available to refugees, and why there may be some extra difficulties for refugees at the moment. Commissioner Munger noted the dollar amount for this item is not very high, and that it will be spread across several counties over a few years. She gave her support for the funding request, trusting staff to work out the details to best help families. Commissioner Jimenez mentioned she doesn't have extensive experience in this area, and she is hoping to see a one-year proposal from staff to fill immediate gaps, and have staff come back to the Commission with another proposal for future endeavors.

Public Comment

Wendi Mahaney-Gurahoo, First 5 Santa Clara County: Ms. Mahaney-Gurahoo showed support for the funding request and discussed the efforts First 5 Santa Clara would do to support the refugee program at the local level to ensure success and long-term sustainability.

Usama Khalil, Refugee Enrichment and Development Association: Mr. Khalil emphasized the need for deeper, more comprehensive support for refugee children and families, especially families with children ages 0 to 5.

Armina Husic, Asian American Community Involvement: Ms. Husic spoke about the trauma that many refugee families face, especially Afghan refugees due to the numerous military operations in the regions over the last few decades. She explained her organization's work in this field and gave her support for the funding request.

Willy Moosayar, United Afghans Association: Mr. Moosayar discussed the difficulties for refugee families in finding affordable housing in the region, especially given the rising costs of living in California and the difficulties of finding stable employment and childcare.

Kristin Spanos, First 5 Alameda County: Ms. Spanos provided support for the funding request to help Afghan families, and noted there are refugees also coming in from Haiti and Central America who could use the same supports.

Ruth Fernandez, First 5 Contra Costa County: Ms. Fernandez gave support for the funding request and shared her personal story as a political asylee from El Salvador.

MOTION/ACTION: Commissioner Jimenez moved to approve up to \$3 million in emergency response funding for a one-year investment to support refugee families resettling in counties across California, and that staff come back to the Commission with a future recommendation for additional investments to ensure families needing support can be better served. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Munger.

VOTE: The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission. Commissioner Alvarez was absent.

Closed Session

The Commission met in closed session pursuant to Government Code section 11126(e)(1) and (2) to confer with and receive advice from its legal counsel regarding: In the Matter of Rescue Agency Public Benefit, LLC, Protestant v. First Five California, Awarding Agency; pending before Department of General Services, State of California, Protest No. 21-036.

The Commission met in closed session pursuant to Government Code section 11126(a) regarding the appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, or dismissal, discipline, or release of public employees, or a complaint or charge against public employees. Public employees include persons exempt from civil service under Article VII, Section 4(e) of the California Constitution.

Action Item 7 – Strategic Advocacy Support Services

Mr. Vargas presented the request for funding for strategic advocacy support services in order to expand the Commission's and First 5 counties' capacity to achieve their public policy and advocacy goals, as well as the Commission's overarching mission.

Discussion

Commissioner Alvarez opened the discussion by asking how F5CA plans to divide advocacy efforts between the federal government and the state government. Mr. Vargas provided examples in which advocacy at the state government level has helped to influence discussions that occur at the federal government level, noting that advocacy at one level or another is not more or less important, but that they sometimes go hand-in-hand. Chair Burke Harris asked for clarification on how the advocacy support services were formerly funded compared to the current proposal. Mr. Vargas explained that previously, different pieces of the scope of work were part of separate contracts, but the goal of the current proposal is to combine all elements into one funding source.

Public Comment

None.

MOTION/ACTION: Commissioner Alvarez moved to approve up to \$4.5 million over 4 years for strategic advocacy support services to implement F5CA's policy agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Majors.

VOTE: The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Information Item 8 – Race, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (REDI): Building Organizational and System REDIness Capacity at the Local Level to Address Outcome Inequities for Young Children

The First 5 Association and county commissions presented the work happening at the local level to achieve more equitable outcomes for children and families across the state.

Discussion

Commissioner Majors opened the discussion by emphasizing the importance of having diverse voices around the table, especially in education. Commissioner Alvarez thanked the presenters for their hard work at the local level and asked how they are getting feedback from community members, so they know they are on the right track. Angie Dillon-Shore from First 5 Sonoma County responded that the Association has been working with a consultant who specializes in community engagement and she noted there are plans for more advisory groups that will consist of community members to inform the work they do. Ms. Stafford Jones added that this is a large piece of the new Strategic Plan, and that the Association will continue to improve communication with the community. Chair Burke Harris asked how the Association is going to measure and evaluate the outcomes to see if they have improved. Julie Gallelo from First 5 Sacramento County responded by saying the Association is continually asking questions to make sure the evaluators they are using are the best for the mission, but they do not have all the answers to that question at the moment. Commissioner Jimenez commended the Association and county commissions for their continued work in this area, and that she is happy to see counties taking bold steps toward a more equitable future for children and families.

Public Comment

None.

Action Item 9 – Adjournment

DISCUSSION: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

MOTION/ACTION: Commissioner Hazan moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jimenez.

VOTE: The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chair Burke Harris adjourned the meeting at 3:37 p.m.

The next scheduled Commission meeting is January 27, 2022.