For Immediate Release **Contact:** Erin Gabel
January 10, 2020 916.708.8895

Paid Family Leave Expansion Needs Echoed by California Voters and Governor Newsom

New Public Opinion Poll Plus Newsom's 2020–21 Budget Unveil Both Policy Issues and Proposed Solutions

Sacramento, CA — A new public opinion poll conducted by Change Research demonstrates that California voters strongly support the expansion of Paid Family Leave which was recently proposed by the Newsom Administration. The online poll, funded by First 5 California, is inclusive of 1,315 registered voters in the state and represents a mix of demographic groups to reflect California's diversity. While voters showed widespread support for protecting all workers' jobs during leave **(83 percent)**, increasing the wage replacement rate **(64 percent)**, and extending the length of time benefits can be accessed **(67 percent)**, Governor Newsom too unveiled his vision for program expansion with the release of his Paid Family Leave Task Force Recommendations and 2020–21 Budget.

As a critical and bold first move, Governor Newsom's 2020–21 Budget Proposal includes measures to provide universal job protection for California workers who access Paid Family Leave.

California's Paid Family Leave program supports workers who take time off to bond with a new child or care for a seriously ill family member. The insurance program, which is funded by employee payroll deductions, was created in 2004, as first in the nation, to acknowledge that bonding time with a parent gives a newborn baby their best chance at good health and future success. Use of Paid Family Leave is associated with higher rates of breastfeeding and improvements in overall child health, along with reduced rates of infant deaths. A growing body of research has shown Paid Family Leave is great for workers *and* their employers, too—program use improves employee morale, reduces staff turnover, and promotes business growth.

While many agree Paid Family Leave is a developmental imperative, only half of eligible mothers and one-quarter of eligible fathers took Paid Family Leave in 2017. Moreover, in 2018, less than one percent of workers earning less than $20,000 utilized Paid Family Leave. Workers who earned less than $20,000 a year represented over 38 percent of the state's workforce in 2018.

- More -

Paid Family Leave is entirely funded by employees—not employers—through payroll deductions. The Governor's Task Force identified low payments and the lack of job protection as the primary reasons California families are missing out on benefits they pay for. With workers only being paid 60 percent or 70 percent of what they usually earn during Paid Family Leave, it can hard for many families to cover basic monthly bills. On top of that, a lack of job protection means a worker could lose their job or be retaliated against for taking leave.

Science shows 90 percent of a child's brain development happens before the age of five which is why First 5 California has worked to improve the lives of children and their families since 1998. "We have coached parents across the state to talk, read, and sing with their child during those first five years, but it's critical to underscore the importance of a child's first few months, too," said Erin Gabel, Chief Deputy Director at First 5 California and Paid Family Leave Task Force Appointee. "We are thrilled the Governor agrees strong families need strong Paid Family Leave policy, and that voters are in turn ready to make expansion a reality," Gabel added.

Toward this end, the Legislature and the Governor worked together to add an additional two weeks of benefits to each Paid Family Leave claim, effective July 1, 2020. To better address barriers to access and improve upon California's Paid Family Leave policy, the Task Force has developed a longer term, step-by-step plan with a phased approach. Highlights from the plan include job protection for all workers, expanding benefits from 6 to 12 weeks, and increasing wage replacement from 60 percent or 70 percent to 75 percent or 90 percent, depending on regular annual earnings.

###

About First 5 California

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