

May 13, 2022

California Department of Public Health
Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division
Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

Dear Diane Lindsey,

We are grateful for your leadership in support of children, families, and communities and thank you for the opportunity to inform California's Title V plan for FY 2022-23. We support California Department of Public Health's Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health priorities and are optimistic that Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant Program will continue to advance health equity for women, birthing people, children, adolescents and families in our state.

As the state continues its work to support the health and wellbeing of our communities, we urge the state to continue intentional efforts to address ongoing disparities in Black infant mortality and improve the health and well-being of women, birthing people, infants, children, adolescents, and families that have been disproportionately impacted by racist, classist systems and policies.

First 5 Alameda County is committed to advocating for and achieving equity for families of our youngest children, with a focus on racial and economic justice, to ensure that all our children are born healthy and can achieve their full potential. With the triple pandemic of COVID-19, racism, and poverty, we are committed to remedying historic, structural racism, with investments that recognize and correct injustice and exploitation of low-income people and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Through programming, investments, [advocacy](#), and engagements we seek to improve underlying structural conditions and outcomes. We support and encourage the state to prioritize:

- **ECONOMIC SUPPORTS:** Policies and programs to increase economic supports and assets for pregnant people and families. Years of research with our biennial [Kindergarten Readiness Assessment](#) suggest that kindergarten readiness is strongly linked to family access to basic needs. Families are struggling to access quality housing, food, and jobs that provide livable wages.
 - We invested in an [evaluation](#) of Help a Mother Out's Diaper distribution program which demonstrated positive impacts on financial stability, stress, health and wellbeing.
- **FAMILY NAVIGATION/CARE COORDINATION:** Building an early childhood system of care that centers the needs of families with an equity lens.
 - Scale and sustainability of cohesive systems for families, such as screening, referral, and care management through pediatric practices, Family Navigation, and Family Resource Centers, that create equitable access to services (i.e. housing, food, legal supports, mental health) that mitigate childhood adversity.
 - Successful implementation of CalAIM, as an avenue for additional resources to support and sustain Alameda County's local pilots and provides opportunities with potential connectivity to pediatric care management - enhanced care management (ECM), community supports and population health.

- PLACE-BASED AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT PROGRAMMING: Invest in trusted community providers. Our Neighborhoods Ready for School grants and [evaluation](#) demonstrate the value of community-based and culturally relevant services available in families' language.
- REPRODUCTIVE AND BIRTH JUSTICE: Partnerships to advance birth equity and reproductive justice are a key health and economic issue for children 0-5.
 - Implementation of new state and federal policies that aim to advance birth equity and reproductive justice, including access to postpartum care, full spectrum doula supports, continuous Medi-Cal eligibility for children 0-5, collection and analysis of data related to birth disparities and related research.
 - In alignment with state efforts, participated and advised in the development of [The Road to Black Birth Justice in California](#) to understand the challenges and opportunities to improve birth outcomes and experiences of Black people and their families in California.
 - Engage state and federal agencies and elected officials about the important role of birth equity to advance racial and economic justice.
- FATHERHOOD: Promote the adoption and integration of the Father-Friendly Principles and father-specific services across community programs and public systems.
 - Promote and acknowledge the critical roles of fathers and father-figures, to improve the experiences of fathers and father-figures when receiving services, and to increase the representation of men and fathers through training, strategic messaging, and the development of high-quality father-centered services.
 - Our Kindergarten Readiness studies have confirmed what the national research indicates – that high-quality, involved fathering, by dads who live in the child's home and separately, has strong, positive impacts on children's development, including academic achievement, emotional well-being, and behavior.

We appreciate the opportunity to inform that state's plan and look forward to opportunities to partner with the state to advance the health and well-being of women, birthing people, infants, children and families in California. Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,