

**FIRST 5 SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**  
**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION**

**COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

January 22, 2025 (Approved March 26, 2025)

**Current Commissioners Present**

Penny Borenstein, M.D. (Chair)  
Dawn Ortiz-Legg (Vice Chair)

SLO County Public Health Department  
SLO County Board of Supervisors

James Brescia, Ed.D.  
Patty Clarkson, Ed.D.  
Nancy Kuster  
Leslie Mehigan  
Alison Ventura, Ph.D.

SLO County Office of Education  
Early Care & Educ. Planning Council  
Department of Social Services  
Community at Large  
Community at Large

**Current Commissioners Absent**

Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, Ed.D.  
James Tedford, M.D.

Community at Large  
Medical Representative (AAP, Ch 2)

**Staff Present**

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Maggie Payne  
Commission Counsel: Daniel Cheung

**Call to Order**

Chair Borenstein called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM.

**ITEM 1 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates**

Commissioner Borenstein reminded that today's meeting location at Department of Social Services is an exception; the remainder of 2025 Commission meetings will be held at the SLO County Office of Education Board Room.

Commissioners Borenstein and Ortiz-Legg launched a new tradition as part of this agenda item to leave time for two Commissioners to provide a brief summary of their life and work. Commissioners Brescia and Clarkson will be scheduled for the March 26<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting.

**ITEM 2 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda**

Lisa Guy, community resident and local author, provided an overview of her work, *Pearls*, a parenting guide available in English and Spanish and in various versions. She has collaborated with local educators, including some First 5 partners, to share information about

the publication and ways to use it with families. She encouraged Commissioners to connect with her regarding additional ways that *Pearls* might be accessed and used.

**ITEM 3 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of the December 4, 2024 Minutes
- b. Approval of FY24-25 Q2 Financial Report
- c. Confirm BOS Commissioner Appointment – Dawn Ortiz -Legg (one-year term Jan-Dec 2025)

*Public Comment: None*

Commissioners took separate votes on Consent Agenda items due to Commissioner Ortiz-Legg need to recuse on Item 3c.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg made a motion to approve Consent Agenda 3a. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ventura and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Mehigan made a motion to approve Consent Agenda 3b. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Clarkson and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Ventura made a motion to approve Consent Agenda 3c. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brescia and passed 6-0 (Ortiz-Legg recused).

**ITEM 4 – Review and Approval, First 5 SLO County Employee Handbook and Personnel Policy Update**

Executive Director Wendy Wendt introduced this item. She thanked First 5 Legal Counsel Daniel Cheung for providing guidance on a full review and updating of the First 5 SLO County Employee Handbook and related personnel policies. Commissioners Ventura and Mehigan also provided final editing support. The update document closely followed a template provided by the California Chamber of Commerce and modified by the Integrated Waste Management Authority – a county-level independent public agency similar in size to First 5 SLO County. The draft document presented for review and final approval by the full Commission is complete, with the exception of additional language to be developed related to telecommuting practice and related parameters.

No Discussion.

*Public Comment: None.*

Commissioner Ventura made a motion to approve the Updated Employee Handbook. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mehigan and passed 6-0 (Ortiz-Legg was out of the room for the vote).

## ITEM 5 – Staff Reports

Ms. Wendt provided the following updates:

- A coalition of immigrant-serving organizations has formed to stay connected and informed regarding federal changes related to immigration policy.
- The First 5 California Commission will hold its quarterly meeting on January 30, 2025. Agendized items include an update on the future of the Parent Kits Program, IMPACT funding, and a First 5 Association proposal related to funding stabilization for county First 5 agencies.
- The First 5 Association has presented a proposal to raise annual dues by up to 300%. Association staff is seeking input from local First 5 agencies.
- The CA Department of Health Care Services requires that MediCal Managed Care Plans statewide invite local First 5 agencies to enter into Memoranda of Understanding to formalize lines of communication and opportunities to mutually reinforce each other's missions. First 5 SLO County and First 5 Santa Barbara County are in conversation with CenCal to develop locally customized MOUs.
- First 5 SLO County submitted a full application to Uplift Central Coast for \$225,000 to mobilize a Regionwide Child Care Coalition across the six Uplift counties – Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz. Funding decisions are expected to be announced by January 31, 2025.
- San Luis Coastal Unified School District (SLCUSD) has proposed a possible end to its Transitional Kindergarten program due to budget short-falls. A large number of people have spoken out against the proposal. The District is now seeking an alternative to closure for the coming year. A longer-term solution is also now being explored.

Commission discussion ensued. One point of clarification addressed was a question as to why SLCUSD would consider cancelling TK at a time when TK is becoming a required offering in CA public schools. SLCUSD is a Basic Aid District, and as such does not receive state funding based on Average Daily Attendance. Increased student enrollment (e.g. TK classrooms) is not accompanied by additional state funding.

- Mary Bianchi, a longtime champion for children and a vocal ambassador for Martha's Place, has died. A Celebration of Life for Mary will be held at the Cambria Veterans Hall on February 8, 2025.

Maggie Payne, Special Projects Coordinator, announced an Early Care and Education Retreat upcoming on January 31, with a focus on collective impact and partnership opportunities in the context of the ever-changing landscape.

Misty Livengood, Communications and Outreach Coordinator, provided the following updates:

- First 5 SLO County recently issued a press release announcing \$4 million in multi-year investments across early childhood health, learning and family resilience.

- First 5 staff will be presenting an annual update at the County Board of Supervisors Meeting on February 25. This is the same day as a County Proclamation for National Children's Dental Health Month.
- April – Month of the Child – is fast approaching. Children's Day in the Plaza in SLO is April 5. San Miguel Dia del Niño is April 26. Other events and dates will be added and posted on First 5's website and social media.
- Community forums on changes to immigration policy and relevant information for local families are being held in various locations throughout the county.
- Parent engagement program calendars for winter and spring are filling up fast – e.g. CAPSLO, Center for Family Strengthening/Parent Connection, Parent Participation and South County Learning Pods.
- *Fizz the Fuzz* – a children's book highlighting indoor air quality and published through the County Public Health Department – is now available at family resource centers in North County and at the Nipomo Library.
- The First 5 Association is hosting its annual Advocacy Day in Sacramento on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The First 5 SLO County staff time plans to attend.
- First 5 CA New Parent Kit Program is currently on pause due to changes in production and distribution contracts. Shipments are hoped to resume sometime in February.
- On January 13<sup>th</sup>, First 5 SLO County staff volunteered at the SLO Food Bank.

*PUBLIC COMMENT:*

None

**ITEM 6 – Report Summary and Presentation: *The Fabric of SLO County – Understanding the Diversity and Contributions of Our Immigrant Community***

Joel Diringier of Diringier and Associates presented a summary of the report he authored with funding support from the Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County, County Supervisors, Diversity Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, MUST Charities and First 5 San Luis Obispo County.

Mr. Diringier provided an outline of the history, population statistics, economic and social contributions and challenges experienced by immigrant communities living in San Luis Obispo County. Following are key data highlighted during the presentation (primarily drawn from U.S. Census):

- An estimated 50% of immigrants in the County are U.S. citizens.
- Immigrants make up approximately 10% (26,271) of the County population (~280,000).
- Latine population (immigrants and U.S. born combined) are ~23% of the County.
- Farmworker population is 12,721 (an estimated 50% are undocumented).
- An estimated 5,700 indigenous Mexican individuals (Mixteco speaking) reside in the county.

- The number of undocumented people in the county is estimated at between 7,000 and 8,000.
- Immigrants contribute significantly to state and local economies (e.g. \$8.5 billion in state and local taxes) but most cannot access benefits such as Social Security and Unemployment insurance.
- Workforce statistics of note: Latine immigrants on the Central Coast make up
  - 92% of farmworkers
  - 54% of cooks
  - 54% of construction laborers
  - 49% of food preparation workers
  - 48% of janitors
  - 38% of truck drivers
  - 32% of childcare workers
- Median wage for immigrants in the county's workforce is \$18 (compared to \$28 for U.S. born).
- Immigrants across all categories of legal status experience significant challenges, including language barriers, lack of trust in institutions, lack of sense of safety accessing healthcare/education/protection from crime, legal restrictions.

Discussion ensued. Commissioners inquired what are the next steps following the release of the report. Mr. Diringer and Ms. Wendt described the formation of a coalition of organizations that provide support services to families including immigrant community members, in preparation for a wave of major change in immigration policy and enforcement at the federal level. Commissioner Brescia announced that information and recommendations are being issued by the County Office of Education to local school districts.

***PUBLIC COMMENT:***

Lisa Fraser, Executive Director at the Center for Family Strengthening and the LINK, announced that the LINK is working with Shandon School District to offer an informational forum for families.

Rita Casaverde, Executive Director of the Diversity Coalition San Luis Obispo County, emphasized the importance of solid data to paint an accurate picture of San Luis Obispo County diversity and the immigrant experience. She pointed out that the 2030 Census is approaching soon, and planning is already underway to promote maximum participation. She also announced the 2025 Diversity Coalition series titled "Migration and Humanity in Motion."

**ITEM 7: Executive Director Evaluation: Process Introduction**

First 5 Legal Counsel representative Daniel Cheung introduced this item. He explained the role of Legal Counsel to coordinate the annual personnel evaluation for the Executive Director. Ms. Wendt will complete a self-evaluation. This year, Mr. Cheung's office will create and distribute an evaluation form in February for Commissioners to complete. A closed session item during the March meeting will be agendaized for the Commission to discuss the evaluation and review with Ms. Wendt.

***PUBLIC COMMENT:*** None

### **ITEM 8 (ACTION ITEM) - Election of 2025 Officers: Chair and Vice Chair**

Legal Counsel Daniel Cheung introduced the item, with a review of the annual requirement for Commissioners to accept nominations and then vote on a Chair and Vice Chair.

Commissioner Borenstein expressed that she does not feel a need to continue in the Chair role for another year, suggested Dawn Ortiz-Legg as Chair. Commissioner Ortiz-Legg accepted this nomination and asked if any Commissioners are interested in being Vice Chair.

Commissioner Mehigan asked for a description of the Vice Chair's role. Ms. Wendt explained that the Vice Chair needs to be available to chair meetings if the Chair is absent. Both the Chair and Vice Chair are authorized signers for bank statements, contracts, etc. In general, Ms. Wendt also relies on the Chair and Vice Chair for guidance in between meetings.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg nominated Commissioner Brescia for the Vice Chair role. Commissioner Brescia accepted the nomination.

*Public Comment: None*

Commissioner Borenstein made a motion to approve the nomination slate: Dawn Ortiz-Legg as the 2025 Chair and James Brescia as the Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mehigan and passed unanimously 6-0 (Commissioner Clarkson had left the meeting prior to the vote).

### **ITEM 9: Future Agenda Items**

Commissioner Mehigan requested updates on activities related to the formation of the immigrant services coalition described in Item 8.

*PUBLIC COMMENT: None*

### **ITEM 10 – Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 5:11 p.m.