

July 25 Readers' letters

From Mercury News readers

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FIRST 5 is not reason for budget mess

The writer (Letters, July 23) who accused FIRST 5 of turning a deaf ear to children is in fact turning a blind eye to FIRST 5's enormous investment in children's health. In partnership with California FIRST 5, our local FIRST 5 has covered over 4,200 young [Santa Cruz County](#) children in coverage programs that include our local [Healthy Kids](#) program. Last year, our local FIRST 5 contributed an additional \$100,000 to prevent a Healthy Families waiting list in California, brought on by our state budget crisis. Since then, they have earmarked another \$500,000 for this same purpose. Our local First 5 is led by trusted community leaders who evaluate and invest in the health care needs of our most vulnerable children. FIRST 5 is not responsible for the state's budget crisis.

Martina O'Sullivan

Director for community engagement Dominican Hospital Santa Cruz

Thanks to FIRST 5 for children's health care

I would like to respond to Patrick Hagan's (Letters, July 23) letter chastising FIRST 5's efforts to protect the health of our children in California. I run the foundation that supports the Children's Health Initiative, an effort to insure all children in our county. FIRST 5 Santa Clara has covered all the children up to age 5 who were not eligible for state and federal programs for the last eight years. FIRST 5 also funded the state's shortfall in Healthy Families last year. Before FIRST 5, one out of every eight children in this county did not have health insurance; FIRST 5 has made it possible to insure 100 percent of the newborn to 5-year-old children in this county under 300 percent of the poverty level.

I wake up thankful each day that we voted in FIRST 5, that they are not only taking care of health care but making sure that children are identified early that may have autism, that they are helping to get kids ready for school, that they have budgeted their funds so that their programs can continue. Their unspent funds are for well-planned programs, and who of us should say which programs should go away to backfill the state's shortfall and how long should FIRST 5 do this? New York state covers children up to 400 percent of the poverty level without a FIRST 5. Why can't we insist on the same?

Kathleen King

Executive director Santa Clara Family Health Foundation Campbell

July 22 Readers' letters

From Mercury News readers

First 5 leaders deaf to state's realities

There is a sobering deafness coming from First 5 California and the 58 county commissions this summer. They remained silent on the dismantling of the Healthy Families program, which provides affordable health insurance to 900,000 children while they sit on \$2.5 billion in unspent funds. Silent as almost 1 million Californians lose their health insurance as a result of escalating insurance premiums and job losses while they receive \$580 million in revenue every year from Proposition 10.

Silent as more than 683,000 children in California are uninsured while First 5 San Diego grants \$67 million to organizations that employ members of their own advisory committee. Silent as hospitals in California are hit with across-the-board reductions in Medicaid payments while First 5 Riverside votes to approve an \$11.7 million grant to programs run by two commissioners. As an estimated 350,000 eligible children are about to be placed on a waiting list for health insurance, the deafness of First 5 California and the 58 county commissions to the needs of California's children is disturbing and unacceptable.

Patrick Hagan

Family Solutions Felton