



July 29, 2020

Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Kamala Harris  
Representative Barbara Lee  
Representative Eric Swalwell  
Representative Ro Khanna

Re: Equitable Legislation for COVID-19 Relief and Beyond

Dear Alameda County Delegation,

Our country is currently facing an unprecedented crisis in the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus has taken a devastating toll on communities that have long faced historical injustices and violence, and we are seeing the virus exacerbate existing inequities in real time. While the virus has wreaked havoc especially on communities of color, issues of racial injustice have also garnered national attention. Recent examples of police brutality have brought to the forefront systemic problems that are responsible for racial disparities in COVID-19 infection and death rates.

At First 5 Alameda County, we have been doing everything in our power to provide relief for families with young children ages 0-5 during this time. Thankfully, the infrastructure we had before the pandemic allowed us to quickly redistribute our resources to best help families. Additionally, the First 5 Alameda County Commission recently passed a [Resolution on Equity and Social Justice](#). The Resolution highlighted our continued pledge to advocate for more just systems and policies, and our organizational commitment to operational equity as we continue to evolve. In direct response to covid-19 [First 5 Alameda County also established a Community Resilience Fund](#) to help meet the needs of communities, families and children. Some of our recent efforts include:

- Purchase and distribution of concrete needs and essential supports for providers and families, working with Alameda County Community Food Bank and SupplyBank.Org
- Investment in family-serving shelters to improve access to essential supplies for unhoused families with young children, with support from Sunlight Giving
- Funding school districts throughout the county to provide support for families and children transitioning from preschool to kindergarten
- Investment in local family childcare providers in partnership with the Low-Income Investment Fund and Silicon Valley Community Foundation, increasing access to financial technical assistance

While our work has been crucial, it alone will not be enough to remedy the damage done and worsened by the pandemic. We still see unmet need in testing, contact tracing, access to technology for remote learning, direct financial support, and more that could be addressed in policy.

COVID-19, racism and poverty are not separate issues and should not be treated as such in legislation. Not only do these issues pose a threat to public health, they are a threat to the overall wellbeing and

economic survival to a significant number of communities. It is essential that the following points are integrated in the next COVID-19 relief bill:

- **Direct support to individuals, families, and communities in need—not corporations.** Individuals, families, and communities need immediate economic assistance, food assistance, and policies that will support their ability to take care of their own health, such as paid sick leave. They also need to be able to access timely COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- **Support Black, indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color.** In addition to economic and health assistance, we need policies that will reverse the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on communities of color and position those communities to be able to achieve a just and equitable recovery. The Movement for Black Lives' National Demands for COVID-19 include supporting essential workers—43% of whom are people of color; protecting voters—especially Black voters, who are being targeted for disenfranchisement; and releasing people from jails, prisons, and detention centers.
- **Provide direct funding for state and local governments.** State and local governments are staring down enormous budget deficits after having stepped up to meet their residents' needs during this crisis. Without federal assistance, they will have to cut health and social services, education, environmental protection, and other crucial programs. Cities and states are on the frontline of our country's response to COVID-19, and we can't afford to let them to go bankrupt as they try to meet their residents' needs during this crisis.
- **Protect immigrant families during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.** The laws that Congress has enacted so far to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic have excluded immigrants and their families—a tragic slight that has left all of us more vulnerable. The next COVID-19 health and stimulus bill needs to work for immigrants, including making sure everyone can access COVID-19 testing, treatment, and emergency assistance regardless of immigration status.

Ensuring the childcare system remains strong during this crisis is also an issue of equity. As mentioned previously, many essential workers for whom childcare is an urgent need are people of color. Furthermore, while women of color make up 20% of the American population, they make up 40% of the childcare workers in the United States. For these reasons and many more, we ask that you **support the following pieces of legislation:**

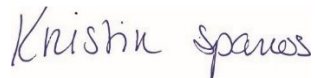
- **Childcare is Essential Act** (H.R. 7027 and S. 3874), legislation that would create a \$50 billion Child Care Stabilization Fund within the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to stabilize the child care sector in light of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Child care providers, many of whom have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, now face great financial risk and challenges to reopening strong programs—including reduced enrollment, increased cleaning and facility-related costs, staffing adjustments and other potentially insurmountable challenges. This act would strengthen and stabilize the child care sector by providing grant funding to child care providers that could support operating expenses, tuition and copayment relief for families, health and safety compliance, and continuing wages to staff. Without this support, we risk permanently losing half of our nation's child care supply.
- The **Coronavirus Child Care & Education Relief Act** would build on the educational investments from the CARES Act and provide almost \$430 billion in funding for child abuse and neglect prevention, child care, K-12 education, postsecondary education, and workforce development. The \$430 billion would provide funding for the Childcare is Essential Act, the Child Abuse

Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and money for governors to support educational programs significantly impacted by COVID-19.

- The **Child Care Infrastructure** (H.R. 7201/H.R. 2/H.R. 7327) would provide a \$10 billion investment in our nation's child care infrastructure over the next 5 years and provide dedicated technical assistance resources through experienced intermediaries like Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).
- The **COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Disparities Task Force** (S. 3721) would create a task force to inform policy and funding recommendations to FEMA, other federal agencies and Congress; and provide recommendations and advise to federal agencies on disbursement of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding, including small businesses loans. Finally, S.3721 calls on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to publish more detailed data on COVID-19 broken down by race and ethnicity, and it would also establish a permanent Infectious Disease Racial and Ethnic Disparities Task Force to continue monitoring inequities within the health care system and improve future infectious disease responses.

The above policy priorities will help in assisting vulnerable communities in their current moment of need. The investments will also ensure the country comes out of this crisis stronger and with a deeper commitment to equity, and therefore each other, than before.

Sincerely,



Kristin Spanos  
Chief Executive Officer  
First 5 Alameda County

CC:

Alameda County Administrator Susan Muranishi

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Chair of Personnel, Advocacy, and Legislation (PAL) Committee

First 5 Alameda County Commission Chair Renee Herzfeld

First 5 Alameda County Commissioner Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan

Alameda County Supervisor Richard Valle, Board President

Kris Perry, Deputy Secretary, CA Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Early Childhood Development, and Senior Advisor to the Governor

Giannina Pérez, Senior Policy Advisor for Early Childhood, Office of the Governor

Melissa Stafford-Jones, Executive Director, First 5 Association

Margot Grant-Gould, Policy Director, First 5 Association of California