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**FIRST 5 SHASTA HELPS PROVIDE FUNDING SOLUTION
TO AVERT CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE CRISIS**

First 5 Shasta contributes funding to prevent local enrollment freeze

(Redding, CA) – First 5 Shasta commissioners voted Wednesday to contribute \$83,962 in funds that will keep local children ages 0-to-5 from being placed on waiting lists for health coverage. This funding will pay health care premiums for new applicants to the Healthy Families program until the end of June.

“First 5 Shasta is pleased to help expand health coverage access to more children in our county, particularly during this period of rising unemployment and economic instability,” said Muffy Berryhill, First 5 Shasta executive director. “This important collaboration continues to make health coverage affordable and accessible to our most vulnerable children.”

First 5 Shasta’s contribution is part of a \$16.7 million joint initiative between First 5 California and First 5 county commissions throughout the state. The funds provide immediate relief for infants and young children who would have been denied health coverage because of the state’s budget crisis.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger; Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg; Assembly Speaker Karen Bass; and Lesley Cummings, director of the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board, which administers the Healthy Families program, have all expressed public support of First 5’s funding contribution.

About First 5 Shasta

Research shows that a child’s brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child’s growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 Shasta has invested approximately \$12 million in Prop.10 revenues in programs and services that meet local needs.

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